A Walk Through Time

A History of Funeral Service

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Chapter 1

Introduction

To fully appreciate where we are and to get a perspective on where funeral service is heading with respect to the evolving consumer, it is helpful to trace the origins of funeral service from the beginning. The beginning of the story of funeral service can be traced back to great civilizations of the ancient worlds, including, among others, the Babylonian, Assyrian, Chaldean and Persian civilizations. Ancient Egypt has, perhaps, contributed the most to modern funeral practices. For 5,000 years in the Nile Delta and southward along its flood plain, there flourished a culture in which the art of embalming reached a high stage of early development.[1]

The history of funeral service is a history of rites, rituals, and fears that go back to our earliest civilizations. Every culture and civilization has attended to what they believed was proper care of their dead. Their behaviors and actions were based upon:

- fear of unseen forces.
- religious and spiritual beliefs.
- beliefs on whether there is life after death.
- what type of life there is after death.
- what happens to the soul and body after death.
- superstitious beliefs about death.
- the social status of the person who dies.
- beliefs toward the meaning of life.
- any connections between those living and those that have died.
- beliefs about the human connection with animals and nature.

Burial customs and death rituals among different cultures have varied widely because of differences in the above beliefs. Most civilizations ever studied had four things in common related to death and the disposition of the dead.

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[1] Virginia Funerals-A Brief History of Funeral Services, (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.vafunerals.com/resources/Va-Virginia-Funerals-A-Brief-History-Of-Funeral-Services.htm

1. Some Type of Rites, Rituals and Ceremonies for the Dead

To us today some of these rites may seem odd. For example, leaving a deceased exposed to the elements so animals can eat the flesh which cleaned the bones for use in a later burial may seem barbaric. However, for these very early cultures it was a practical alternative. Can you imagine a family today saying we're going to leave grandad out in the yard for the birds?

2. A Special Place for the Dead

We call our special places cemeteries or memorial gardens. Special places for the dead can be traced back to the newly discovered pre-human ancestor, **Homo naledi** whose special place was a cave.

Ancient Romans located their special places outside their cities to insure there would be no contamination of its citizens from the dead. Requiring cremations be held outside the city protected dwellings from catching fire from hot debris in the air from the pyre. Early Christians and some Romans created special places underground called catacombs.

3. Memorialization of the Dead

Historically, the sight of a dead body laid out in someone's front parlor (living room) would not have been at all unusual. Indeed, the home was the location of the funeral as far back as the ancient Greeks and Romans right up to the early 1900s in Europe, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and the U.S. Today, home funerals are the exception because funeral homes have taken over that responsibility.

Grief breaks hearts, and funerals help to mend them.

In the past, some cultures' activities honoring the dead took place days, weeks, months or years after the final disposition. These memorial activities could have been either secular or religious. Today some families choose not to have any funeral activities at the time of death but instead have a memorial service days or weeks after the interment.

4. Special People to Care for the Dead and Post-Death Activities

When an ancient Egyptian died, his/her family would take the deceased body to the Necropolis where paid functionaries would explain the options available to the family

and the embalmer would embalm and prepare the body according to the family wishes. The ancient Romans also used paid functionaries to prepare the body and take charge of the funeral and procession. In 18th Century England, Barber-Surgeons did a form of embalming. During the early and mid-1800s in the United States before the appearance of undertakers, midwives, nurses and other women known as **"layers out of the dead"** took care of the immediate tasks following a death. During the mid-1800s, undertakers were beginning to be the functionary to lay out a body and oversee the funeral and procession, but did not do embalming. It was not until the Civil War that embalming became popular. After the Civil War undertakers learned the art of embalming and offered it to their communities.

Many of our funeral customs have their basis in pagan rituals.

Primitive man lived in a world of fear. He reacted to most natural phenomena such as weather events based on that fear. He eventually attributed many life events to his instinctive knowledge of a higher being or power. In his primitive mind, life and death events were the acts of spirits. Since he was not able to see or sense these spirits, he lived in a world of terror. In an effort to enact some type of truce with these "gods" or "spirits," man devised charms, ceremonies and rituals to placate these spirits. The first burial customs then, were crude efforts to protect the living from the spirits, which caused the death of the person.[2]

- Modern mourning clothing came from the custom of wearing special clothing as a disguise to hide identity from returning spirits. Pagans believed that returning spirits would fail to recognize them in their new attire and would be confused and overlook them.

- Wakes held today come from ancient customs of keeping watch over the deceased to ensure he/she was not buried alive as well as an act of respect and devotion. The ancient Greeks and Romans held vigils to ensure the person was really dead. Through the 18th and 19th centuries, there also developed a morbid fear of being buried alive, which led to the invention of various devices that hopefully would alert people to this fact. These included the safety coffin where a bell was placed at the top of a tube that extended from above ground to inside the coffin; a rope was then attached to the bell and placed in the hand of the deceased. If the poor unfortunate soul found he was not dead after all, he could ring the alarm. Other safety coffins involved elaborate contraptions of tubes and

[2] Rostad, C. D.(n.d.). The Basics of Funeral Service. Retrieved from http://www.indiana-fda.org/the-basics-of-funeral-service#introduction

mirrors which allowed gravediggers to look into coffins for signs of life, or putrefaction.[3]

- The lighting of candles comes from the use of fire in attempts to protect the living from the spirits. In many cultures a candle was set near the body. Torches and lights have been used since before the time of the Romans and even today lighted candles are placed at either end of the casket for some Catholic wakes. We find that vehicles in the funeral procession often travel with their headlights on. There are of course, many symbolic reasons as well as practical explanations for this. However, it all started because many of the early funerals were held at night, and the sight of a corpse was thought to violate the saintliness of the priest or magistrates. The lights gave them warning to take another route. The word "funeral" is derived from the Roman word *Funeralis,* meaning "Torch Light Parade"

- The practice of ringing bells comes from the common medieval belief that the spirits would be kept at bay by the ringing of a consecrated bell. They were later used to announce a death or funeral.

- The firing of a rifle volley over the deceased mirrors the tribal practice of throwing spears into the air to ward off spirits hovering over the deceased.

- Originally, holy water was sprinkled on the body to protect it from the demons.

- Covering the face of the deceased with a sheet stems from pagan tribes who believed that the spirit of the deceased escaped through the mouth. They would often hold the mouth and nose of a sick person shut, hoping to retain the spirts and delay death.

- Funeral music has its origins in the ancient chants designed to placate the spirits.

Closing Eyes and Mouth

Some superstitious death rituals are also practical. The closing of the eyes of the recently deceased person in Britain was cited as being due simply to guard against rigor mortis setting in while they were still open; the eyelids being one of the first parts to be affected. However, this was often combined with a superstition that being looked at by a corpse could threaten you and your kin. To aid this, pennies were sometimes placed on

[3] Ibid.

eyelids to keep them shut.[4] A more poetic thought was that **"the dead may look no more upon this imperfect life, now that they have seen the glory of heaven and that they may no more taste anything of this world but only use their mouths to praise God."**[5]

Covering Mirrors

The belief that all the mirrors in a dead person's house should be covered at death stems from the 16th century idea that one's reflection was in fact an embodiment of the soul. It was thought that at death the soul escaped the body and so was vulnerable to being trapped in a mirror. This custom has generally not been carried over to modern times.

Items in Casket

Today all of us in funeral service have seen families put items in the casket with the deceased; they are usually photos, cigarettes, liquor or mementos. This custom also goes back as far as early prehistoric time. Neanderthals buried flowers and some hunting gear with their dead. The Egyptians frequently buried wheat with their dead because it was plentiful and considered the staff of life. Egyptian Royalty probably hold the prize for the most numerous and high-quality items buried with their dead. Some cultures slaughtered slaves and placed their remains in the tomb. In Mexico at one time, kings were buried with their jester for their amusement.

- A Swedish custom was to put a mirror in the casket with unmarried women so they could arrange their hair on Resurrection Day. Married women did not need a mirror because they wore braids.

- Some British folks would place an hourglass in the coffin to represent the "running out of time."

- In Russia, the custom was to place a parchment Certificate of Good Conduct in the hands of the deceased to be used as admittance into the Realm of Bliss.[6]

Before the advent of Christianity, the dead were simply carried outside the cities and deposited in fields or other likely places. The actual start of the public burial

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[4] Theobold, D. (n.d.). Native American Death Rituals. Retrieved from http://dying.lovetoknow.com/native-american-death-rituals
[5] Ibid.
[6] Puckle, B. S.(1926). Preparation for Burial, Coffins, "Grave Goods," Suttee. T. Werner Ltd. (Ed.), Funeral Customs. Retrieved from http://www.sacred-texts.com/etc/fcod/fcod06.htm

grounds as we know them today, started during the sixth century when St. Cuthbert obtained permission to use the church yards for the burial of the dead. The consecrated ground was calculated to provide protections against corruption of the soul, plus giving a measurable amount of protection against witches, vampires, or beasties that went bump in the night.

Protection for the soul was a serious business and no efforts were spared. In London and elsewhere it was customary to hire a "Sire", or sin eater, a person who specialized in removing the sins from a person's soul. He would either stand over the corpse or sit on a stool by the door. The family would then provide him a ritual meal consisting of a bowl filled with ale or beer and a crust of bread. As soon as he was paid the established price, he would proceed to eat and drink, symbolizing his eating the deceased's sins, thereby pawning his own soul to ease the rest of the departed.

In England and Ireland it was customary to place a plate of salt either over the heart or on the stomach. The reason for this was two-fold. First, because the devil hated salt and secondly, because the plate of salt helped to prevent the entry of air into the bowels, thus making it easier to close the coffin. In Scotland, the plate contained separate portions of earth and salt. The earth was an emblem of the corruptible body, and the salt was an emblem of the immortal spirit.

Early burial containers were not outfitted with the padding that we now use but a thick layer of bran often was poured into the bottom of the chest for a similar effect.

Throughout history society's view of death has changed from fear to a common occurrence of acceptance, something to look forward to and even romanticized. It seems to the author that death in the 20th and 21st centuries has become the enemy, a forbidden occurrence, something to beat. Dylan Thomas reflected on this when he wrote:

> ***"Do not go gentle into that good night. Old age should burn and rave at the close of the day; Rage, rage against the dying of the light."***[7]

We have seen a corollary to these views of death in the changes in peoples' views about what constituted proper post-death care. Care has gone from bodies being left for animals, to burial in shrouds, to embalming, to coffins and then casket burials, and on to cremation. Once it was considered "the greater the funeral ceremony the better," and now it seems less is better, such as having a cremation with a memorial

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[7] Thomas, D. (1952). *In Country Sleep, And Other Poems.* Retrieved from www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/do-not-go-gentle-good-night

service at a later date. There is one thing that is certain about the care of the dead and life itself - change, continuous change.

The Purpose of the Funeral

Modern funerals today serve many purposes just as they did throughout history. The following statements best express them.

The funeral:

- **helps confirm the reality and finality of death.**
- **provides a climate of mourning and the expression of grief.**
- **allows the sorrows of one to become the sorrows of all.**
- **is a time when love is given and not expected in return.**
- **is a vehicle for the community to pay its respects.**
- **encourages the affirmation of religious faith.**
- **is a declaration that a life has been lived, as well as a sociological statement that a death has occurred.**
- **allows people to remember and honor their loved one in a special way.**
- **serves as a central gathering place for family and friends to give emotional support to one another.**
- **encourages mourners to face the pain of their loss and express their thoughts and feelings.**
- **can help the survivors to better cope with their grief and enables them to move forward in their lives.**
- **can initiate the grief process while bringing closure to the death, for some.**[8]

[8] Rostad, C.D. (n.d.). The Basics of Funeral Service: Funeral Customs. Retrieved from http://www.indiana-fda.org/the-basics-of-funeral-service

Chapter 2

The Development of Egyptian Embalming and Funeral Practices

Pre-Egyptian Era

Neanderthals were an ancient species of early humans living over 60,000 years ago. In 1908 two brothers who were archeologists uncovered a 50,000 year old skeleton in a cave in La Chapelle-aux-Saints, France. The brothers immediately speculated that the remains were intentionally buried. However, the lack of information about the excavation procedures that were used as well as the fact that they were Catholic priests, caused many skeptics to wonder if the discovery had been misrepresented. "There has been a tendency among researchers working on this topic to discard all evidence coming from old excavations just because the excavations were done long ago," said Francesco d'Errico, an archeologist at the University of Bordeaux in France who was not involved in the study.[9]

Most anthropologists now agree, based on evidence uncovered at 20 or more gravesites throughout Western Europe, that our closest evolutionary relatives buried their dead at least some of the time.[10] "The idea that Neanderthals buried their dead fits with recent findings that they were capable of symbolic thought and of developing rich cultures. For example, findings show they likely decorated themselves using pigments, and wore jewelry made of feathers and colored shells."[11]

Evidence from the La Chapelle site also suggests that Neanderthals were like us in that they cared for their sick and elderly. The skeleton discovered by the Bouyssonie brothers belonged to a Neanderthal who was missing most of his teeth and showed signs of hip and back problems that would have made movement difficult without

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[9] What Does It Mean to be Human? La Chapelle-Aux-Saints. (2016, March 30). Retrieved from http://humanorigins.si.edu/evidence/human-fossils/fossils/la-chapelle-aux-saints
[10] Than, K. (2013, December 16). Neanderthal Burials Confirmed as Ancient Ritual. National Geographic. Retrieved from http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/12/131216-la-chapelle-neanderthal-burials-graves/
[11] Ibid.

assistance. Before they took care of his dead body, the other members of his group would have had to have taken care of his living one.

Cro-Magnon, a name used to describe the first early modern humans who populated the earth around approximately 10,000 BCE, were found to bury their dead in the fetal position. They were wrapped in skins and positioned on reed mats on the bottom of the grave.

A discovery of a new human species was announced on Thursday, September 10, 2015. The species called **Homo nalidi** was found in a cave in South Africa. Besides introducing a new species of pre-human family that existed over 2.5 million years ago, the discovery suggests these early hominins intentionally deposited their dead in a largely inaccessible cave chamber. It has been believed up to now, that this type of behavior was previously considered limited to a species existing many thousands of years later.[12]

Egypt Time Table

Predynastic Period 5500 BCE – 3100 BCE

For the most part, burial during this time was a simple matter for most people. A grave was dug in the sand and the body was covered with a cloth and then placed in the grave. The grave was filled with sand and stones not only to cover it but to also protect the deceased from scavenging jackals. Preservation of the deceased occurred to a certain extent naturally by desiccation from the arid desert conditions and from the sand which naturally removed the liquid from the body.[13]

Early Dynastic Period 3099 BCE – 2686 BCE

In the later years of the Predynastic Period and into the Early Dynastic Period, the elite of the population desired more and more elaborate final resting places. Tombs became more massive with above ground sections. These tombs were called **mastabas** and began to require new preservation techniques which included removing the internal organs, wrapping the body in linen and burying the deceased in a stone

[12] New Human Ancestor Discovered [Blog post]. (2016, May 20). Retrieved from https://mp3flyinfo.blogspot.com/2016/05/mp3fly-new-human-ancestor-discovered.html

[13] Dollinger, A. (2010, December). Predynastic Period Funerary Practices: Preparation, Processions and Burial. Retrieved from http://www.reshafim.org.il/ad/egypt/funerary_practices/burial.htm

sarcophagus or wooden coffin. The poorer population would bring pieces of clothing, blankets and other types of cloth to be used instead of expensive linen.[14]

Old Kingdom 2685 BCE – 2181 BCE

During the Old Kingdom there developed an increased interest in the condition of the dead body and its relevance to the religious belief of the afterlife. The wrapping of the body in linen, as practiced in the Early Dynastic period, was improved to include the linen being soaked in natron and then covered with resin which enabled the molding of the body's form. This is referred to as a linen mummy. If the linen was covered in plaster, as it sometimes was, it was called a plaster mummy. In some instances, the flesh was removed from the bones and the bones were then coated with resin and wrapped in linen.[15]

Middle Kingdom 1999 BCE – 1650 BCE

During the Middle Kingdom the burial practices which were previously applied only to royals and notable people, became more wide spread to include more of the population that could afford it. The creation of **face masks**, which were often made of linen and plaster and then painted, became popular. The masks for Egyptian royalty were made of gold.[16]

New Kingdom 1549 BCE – 1070 BCE

By the New Kingdom, the Egyptians had perfected the art of mummification. An established order of priests was dedicated to the preservation of the dead and the supervision of the funeral arrangements. When a death occurred, the family went to the city of the dead (Necropolis) and made arrangements for embalming and burial. The best prepared mummies were from this time and include that of Tutankhamun.[17]

Third Intermediate 1069 BCE – 747 BCE

During the early part of this period, the preservation technique changed to resemble taxidermy to make the body look even more natural. During the latter part of this period, there was a revival of the embalming practices of the New Kingdom and the **Canopic Jars** were no longer hollowed out because the entrails were left within the body. The burial ceremonies also replicated the practices of the New Kingdom.[18]

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] History of Egyptian Masks. Retrieved from http://www.historyofmasks.net/mask-history/history-of-egyptian-masks/
[17] Ibid.
[18] Canopic Jars. (2001). Retrieved from http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/digitalegypt/burialcustoms/canopic.html

Ancient Egypt's Social Pyramid

For five thousand years Egypt flourished as a center for arts, science, architecture, construction and religion. The concepts of death and afterlife were intricately entwined with the lives and religion of the people. Their belief in rebirth after death became the driving force behind their funeral practices. Eternal life could be assured by practices such as piety to the Gods, the preservation of the physical body through mummification, and by following all required funeral rituals. Egyptian society was structured like a pyramid. At the very top of this social pyramid was the pharaoh, Egypt's supreme ruler. Pharaohs were believed to be gods, and their word was law. Egypt's Social Classes: Below the pharaoh were the two highest classes in the social pyramid – government officials and priests. They were the most powerful groups in Egypt. Government officials carried out the orders of the pharaoh. Most officials came from noble families; they were powerful, wealthy, and enjoyed a high quality of life.[19]

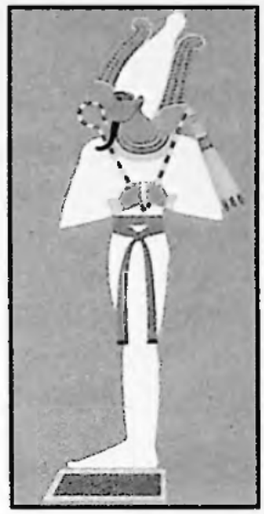
Priests were also a powerful group because religion touched every part of people's daily lives. Priests were in charge of the temples and religious rituals. They also oversaw the important ceremonies surrounding death and burial. Next on the social pyramid were scribes who had to undergo many years of schooling before attaining their status. They recorded information for government and religious leaders and held a respected position in society.[20]

Artisans occupied the next layer of the social pyramid. This group included crafts people like carpenters, metalworkers, painters, sculptors, and stone carvers. Artisans were highly skilled, but had little social status. At the bottom of the social pyramid were the peasants. They were the largest social class and worked the land providing the Egyptians with a steady food supply. When not farming, peasants worked on the pharaoh's massive building projects.[21]

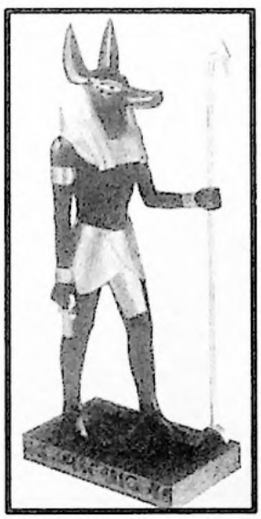
[19] Daily Life in Ancient Egypt, (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.neshaminy.org/cms/lib6/PA01000466/Centricity/Domain/439/Chapter%209%20-%20Daily%20Life%20in%20Ancient%20Egypt%20FULL%20TEXT%20with%20Pictures.pdf
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.

Egyptian Gods

Osiris



Deceased Egyptians were believed to be protected by a number of gods, the chief one among them being **Osiris**. **According to legend, Osiris was a benevolent Egyptian king who was murdered by his brother Seth**, the body sealed in a coffin and floated down the Nile where it eventually landed near the Phoenician city of Byblos. Osiris' sister and wife, **Isis**, sought and recovered the body returning it to Egypt. Unfortunately, brother Seth uncovered the body and dismembered it, scattering the remains. Persistent Isis discovered the dismembered pieces, burying them where she found them. Afterwards, through magical intervention, Osiris was brought back to life by his son, and ruled in the west as the king of the dead.[22]



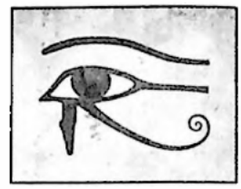
Anubis is the Greek name for the jackal-headed God who was considered the God of Embalming. He was once considered the most **important God of the Dead, but was replaced by Osiris.** It was believed that when a person died, his spirt, AKH would be lead to the Hall of Two Truths by Anubis. Throughout the underworld journey, the deceased's spirit would have to contend with gods, strange creatures and gatekeepers to reach Osiris and the Hall of Two Truths. Here the deceased would explain the type of person he was in life. The better or more righteous the person was, the lighter his heart was at the time of death.

The judgement was a two-part process. The first part involved forty-two judges who would each ask a question with the deceased pleading his innocence of any wrongdoing during his lifetime. The second part was the "Weighing of the Heart Ceremony." It was believed that the heart contained a record of all the deceased's actions in life, and this was weighed against the feather of the goddess **Ma'at**. This feather was the symbol for truth and justice and helped determine whether the deceased person had indeed been virtuous. If the heart was lighter than the feather, the person would move on to a new eternal life. If his heart was heavier than the feather the deceased would be devoured by the demon **Ammit** who was a combination of the three

[22] The Underworld and the Afterlife in Ancient Egypt. (2015, October 30). Retrieved from http://australianmuseum.net.au/the-underworld-and-the-afterlife-in-ancient-egypt

largest "man-eating" animals known to ancient Egyptians - a lion, crocodile and hippopotamus.[23]

Horas



Horas was the God of Healing and Protection. The eye of Horas, called a Wedjat, was recreated on a plate that was placed on the embalming incision to magically heal it.[24]

The Book of the Dead

The "Book of the Dead" was an ancient Egyptian funeral text used from the beginning of the New Kingdom 1549 BCE to around 50 BCE. It was known to the Egyptians as **Rue Nu Pert Em Hru**. It contained magical spells, readings, songs and instructions on how a deceased could navigate the Underworld. The book was revised often during Egyptian history and was often made especially for the wealthy to include in their tombs.[25] In 1895 Masham Adams proposed that the Great Pyramid of Giza was the Egyptian Book of the Dead symbolized in stone. The intimate connection between the secret doctrine of Egypt's most venerated book and the secret significance of her most venerable monument seems impossible to separate from each other.[26]

Egyptologists have deciphered about 200 different spells, mostly written to help the deceased to reach the afterlife. Each Book of the Dead was unique. The following is an example of a Book of the Dead from the Saite period.[27]

- **Chapters 1-16** The deceased enters the tomb, descends to the underworld, and the body regains its powers of movement and speech.
- **Chapters 17-63** Explanation of the mythic origin of the gods and places, the deceased are made to live again so that they may arise, reborn with morning sun.
- **Chapters 64-129** The deceased travels across the sky in the sun ark as one of the blessed dead. In the evening, the deceased travels to the underworld to appear before Osiris.
- **Chapters 130-189** Having been vindicated, the deceased assumes power in the universe as one of the gods. This section also includes assorted chapters on protective amulets, provision of food, and important places.

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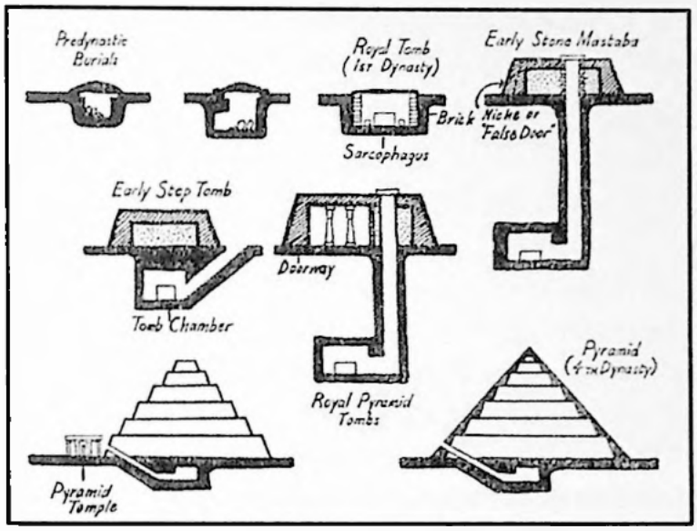
[23] Ibid.
[24] Religion and Gods in Ancient Egypt. (2015, October 30). Last updated October 30, 2015. Retrieved from http://australianmuseum.net.au/the-underworld-and-the-afterlife-in-ancient-egypt
[25] Taylor, J. H. (Ed.). (2010). *Ancient Egyptian Book of the dead: journey through the afterlife*. London: British Museum.
[26] The Relationship Between the Great Pyramid and the Book of the Dead. Retrieved from http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/egipto/egypt_bookdead/pyramid_bookdead.htm
[27] Book of the Dead. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.crystalinks.com/bookofthedead.html

Funeral Structures

Mastaba



Before the building of the pyramid, the "**mastaba**" was a typical structure that was built of brick or limestone and acted as a house of the dead and as a fortress to protect the dead from tomb robbers. Mastabas were historically used for less wealthy persons, but as time passed, they became very ornate and were also used by Royalty. Royal Mastabas had many storage chambers and were beautifully carved and decorated. In a mastaba, the body was lowered down a shaft to the burial chamber. The bottom of the shaft where the sarcophagus was placed was called the Sepulcher. One mastaba was made for each family and sometimes these tombs were used by families for generations. It included a vertical shaft or stairway which led to the underground burial chamber and contained a number of special rooms which were used to accommodate the king's body, the bodies of his servants, and those objects that were buried with him. The Egyptian tomb was filled with large containers of food and drink to be used by the dead in their afterlife. In time, the quantity and variety of these items changed, so that by the reign of **Tutankhamun** a considerable amount of gold and several thousand objects were left in the tomb.[28]

In addition to actual food and drink, the walls of the tomb, or at least the coffin, were covered with illustrations of items that could be brought to life by magic for the use of the departed. Inscriptions were also written in the tombs asking visitors to repeat certain prayers which would help to invoke the magic required to produce the pictured items, which included food and drink, jewelry, clothing, various oils and even weapons.

[28] Dunn, J. (n.d.). The Mastaba (Tomb) of Idu At Giza in Egypt. Retrieved from http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/idut.htm

If all these procedures weren't sufficient, the departed had one more source; relatives would leave food and drink offerings at the tomb on certain feast days.

Sometimes a small statue chapel was constructed near the mastaba in which a small statue of the departed was placed, so that the individual's "**Akh**" (spirit) might attach itself. The mastabas, built for kings, were the forerunner of the pyramids.

Pyramids
2630 BCE - 2148 BCE

Eventually, mastabas became too small for the pharaohs' needs and desires. As the needs of the royal tomb grew, so did the size and style of the mastaba until finally, the pyramids were developed. Granted, pharaohs needed more room for all the items they wanted placed in their tombs, but also their inflated egos drove them to build these gigantic memorials to themselves. The above ground section of the pyramids was just an external monument of the structure of the tomb or the burial chamber which was located underground beneath the pyramids.

The monuments to the perceived self-importance of the pharaohs took thousands of workers and decades, if not a lifetime to build. It took two million blocks of stones that workers had to cut from distant quarries and then transport back to the construction site. During the later years of the Egyptian civilization, pharaohs began to be buried in secret underground chambers in a deserted location in the desert known as the Valley of the Kings.[29]

[29] Van Beck, Todd, The Funeral Gospel, ICC

Funeral Rituals

Funeral Procession

The embalmed body and coffin were collected on the day of burial, probably from the embalmers tent. Funeral processions for wealthy Egyptians would have been an elaborate event to display their status to onlookers. Relatives were positioned at either end of the coffin (which was usually drawn along by oxen), with two of the female relatives or priestesses acting the roles of goddesses, **Isis** and **Nephthys** (the chief mourners in ancient Egyptian religion). Some participants carried canopic jars and grave goods, while others were hired as mourners, dancers, musicians and priests. The procession continued to the edge of the Nile where all the participants were required to board boats and cross the river to the western side, the favored location for burials.[30]

Funeral Rites

The concluding funerary rites took place in front of the tomb. The mummy was raised upright for the '**Opening of the Mouth**' ceremony without the mouth actually being opened. This was an elaborate ritual performed by priests so the dead person could use all their senses in the afterlife. The practices involved in this ceremony included purification, anointing and the reciting of prayers and spells, as well as touching the mummy with ritual objects to restore the senses. After this, food and clothing were offered to the dead person and mourners participated in the funerary banquet. The mummy was then placed in the burial chamber of the tomb.[31]

[30] Funerals in Ancient Egypt. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.australiamuseum.net.au/funerals-in-ancient-Egypt.htm
[31] Ibid.

Embalming

Egyptian preservation began quite simply but developed into what many consider the most complicated and effective preservation process of all time. Embalming in ancient Egypt was done for two reasons:

1. **Preservation** - Egyptian religious belief centered on the immortality of the soul which would never fully forsake the body as long as the body was intact. Embalming provided the process that would preserve the body so the soul could return to it. The ancient Egyptians believed that the physical body was inhabited by three spirits, the **Ka**, **Ba**, and the **Akh**. The Ka was a double of the person and would remain with the dead body in the tomb and needed offerings of food, drink, personal objects and weapons. The Ba or soul was a bird-like spirit that could leave the body, fly out of the tomb and was able to return. The purpose of the Ba was to complete a three-thousand-year journey known as the circle of necessity. During this journey the Ba would experience a variety of forms such as animals, birds, fish, trees and flowers. The Akh or spirit traveled throughout the underworld until it arrived at the entrance to the afterlife and final judgement.[32]

2. **Sanitation** - The writer Cassius maintained that embalming was developed to provide a solution to the problem of trying to bury the dead in the Nile Valley which would be inundated yearly during the rainy season. The Egyptians also believed that this unsanitary condition caused health problems and death.[33]

The reason Egypt is credited with being the land where embalming began is that during the period from 6000 BCE to 600 CE, approximately 400,000,000 bodies were mummified. However, the Egyptians were not the only people to practice some type of preservation of the dead. Ancient Ethiopian tribes preserved their dead in a manner similar to the Egyptians. Babylonians, Persians and Syrians preserved their dead by placing them in large containers of honey or wax, depriving the bacteria in the body of air.

The science and theology of embalming continued to evolve over the years, so there is no single Egyptian ritual. But the standard practices of the New Kingdom's 18th through 20th dynasties (1569 BCE – 1070 BCE), an era that produced some of the best-preserved mummies, are fairly representative.[34]

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[32] History and Culture: Egyptian Mummies. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/nmnh/mummies.htm
[33] Ibid.
[34] Harris, T. (2001, April 4). Egyptian Mummification. Retrieved from http://science.howstuffworks.com/mummy1.htm

Before beginning the embalming process, the Egyptians took the body to the **Ibu**, the **"Place of Purification."** In this house they washed the body in water gathered from the Nile. This represented a sort of rebirth, as the person passed from one world into the next. Once the body was cleaned, the embalmers carried it to the **Per Nefer**, the **"House of Beauty,"** where they began the mummification process.[35]

The deceased would also need his old body to be preserved on Earth. The Ka, the spirit that accompanied the physical body in life, was inexorably linked to the person's corpse. If the corpse were destroyed, the spirit was destroyed along with it. Unlike the first death, this second death was final. Consequently, immortality depended on the mummification of the physical body.[36]

Families were offered three different levels of care for the deceased. Each level had a cost attached to it with the best one costing the most and the basic the least. The methods and some of the beliefs surrounding them are described by **Herodotus** an ancient Greek historian:[37]

Best: "This model of **embalming** involved the **most perfect process.** The embalmers took a crooked piece of iron, and with it drew out the brain through the nostrils, thus getting rid of a portion of the brain while the skull was cleared of the remaining matter with special liquid. Next, they made a cut along the flank with a sharp Ethiopian stone and took out the whole contents of the abdomen which they then cleansed by washing it thoroughly with palm wine and again frequently with an infusion of pounded aromatics." The organs were placed in **canopic jars**:

Lungs: Hapy -jar with an ape's head

Liver: Imsety -jar with a human head

Stomach: Duametef -jar with a jackal head

Intestines: Qebeh-Snewef -jar with a hawk's head

Heart and **Kidney** were left in the body

[35] Harris, T. (2001, April 4). Egyptian Mummification. Retrieved from http://science.howstuffworks.com/mummy1.htm
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

In later years the organs were treated, wrapped and replaced within the body. Even so, unused canopic jars continued to be part of the burial ritual.[38]

"After this they filled the cavity with the purest bruised myrrh, with cassia, and every other sort of spice except frankincense, and sewed up the opening. The body was then cured with natron for approximately 70 days. **(Natron is a naturally occurring mixture of soda ash, sodium bicarbonate, sodium chloride and sodium sulfate found in the Natron Valley in Egypt.)**[39] Once the body was removed from the natron, it was washed and wrapped from head to foot with bandages of fine linen cloth, smeared over with gum which was used generally by the Egyptians in the place of glue. In this state it was given back to the relations who enclosed it in a wooded case which they shaped into the figure of a man." "Then, fastening the case, they placed it in a sepulchral chamber, upright against the wall. Such was the most costly way of embalming the dead."[40] (This is why museums frequently store mummies upright when on display).

The Ancient Egyptian Embalmers Seventy Day Rule for creating mummies.

In addition to **Herodotus'** widely accepted description of the seventy day embalming process, another one is given for the creation of mummies by **A.K. Alchin**:

"The process and rituals practiced by the embalmers for the creation of mummies for their final burial rites lasted for a period of seventy days. **The seventy day period corresponded to the length of time during which Sirius, the 'Dog Star'**, appeared to die by dipping below the horizon. The Seventy Day Rule observed by the embalmers applied to all classes of Egyptians - rich or poor. The seventy-day process for creating the Ancient Egyptian mummies of wealthy Egyptians was divided by the embalmers into the following activities:

- **15 days spent on cleansing and purification**
- **40 days drying period**
- **15 days wrapping, bandaging and painting"**[41]

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[38] Herodotus on Embalming in Egypt. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.excerpts.indepthinfo.com/herodatus-on-embalming-in-ancient-Egypt

[39] Natron. Retrieved July 30, 2016 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natron

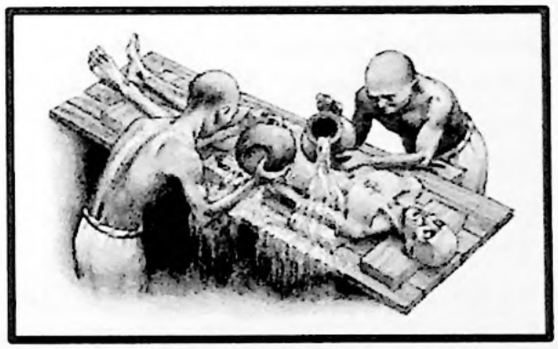
[40] Herodotus on Embalming in Egypt. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.excerpts.indepthinfo.com/herodatus-on-embalming-in-ancient-Egypt

[41] Ibid.

Good: "The method of embalming for those wanting **the middle way, to escape great expense,** is as follows. Using syringes, the embalmers fill the stomach and anal cavity with cedar oil, while stopping it from flowing out until the end of the process. They then cover the body in natron for a prescribed number of days. The cedar oil has such strength that it brings out with it all the dissolved stomach and intestines. The natron dissolves the flesh and only the bones are left. They remove the oil previously injected at the end of the process. When this is over they return the body."[42]

Basic: "The third method and least expensive of embalming is the one used by the poorer classes. The embalmers just wash out the inside with a solvent then pickled it for seventy days and return it to the relatives."[43]

The embalmers were believed to be special priests. Beyond knowing the correct rituals and prayers needed to be performed at various stages in the process, they also needed a detailed knowledge of human anatomy.[44]



Embalming Method Questioned

The embalming description given by Herodotus in 450 BC is being questioned by an anthropologist from the University of Western Ontario. Dr. Andrew Wade and his colleagues reviewed the scholarly lectures describing 150 mummies from various time periods and then CT-scanned and produced 3D reconstructions of seven mummies. Their findings reported:

- No evidence of cedar oil enemas.
- The inner organs of rich and poor alike exited through an abdominal slit.
- One-fifth of the mummies had brains, one-quarter still had hearts.
- Around the same time that mummification became more available to the masses, hearts were retained at a higher rate for the deceased elites.

Dr. Wade believes the observations of Herodotus were a snapshot of a brief period of mummification.[45]

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Cohen, J. (2013, March 26). Ancient Egyptian Mummification Practices Revisited by New Study. Retrieved from http://www.history.com/news/ancient-egyptian-mummification-practices-revisited-by-new-study

The Ancient Egyptian Sarcophagus

The Ancient Egyptian Sarcophagus is a limestone container that usually housed a coffin and an Egyptian mummy. The word **"sarcophagus"** was derived from two Greek words, **"sarx"** meaning **"flesh"** and **"phagein"** meaning **"to eat."** When bodies were placed in these sarcophagi, the limestone had the property of consuming the body's tissues, thus the phrase **"flesh-eating."** The Greeks called these limestone coffins, sarcophagi lithos. The name sarcophagus was eventually applied to stone coffins in general, which were not sunk underground. The Egyptian interpretation of the word was the **'processor of life'** whereas we would believe the interpretation should be more akin to possessor of death.[46]

During the 18th to 20th dynasties, the outer sarcophagus enclosed a series of inner coffins, also referred to as shrines, the last of which would contain the royal mummy of the Pharaoh. It was highly decorated with ornate carvings and paintings. A typical sarcophagus was carved with hieroglyphs and reliefs, both internally and externally. The earliest type of stone sarcophagus was used by the Egyptian Pharaohs of the 3rd Dynasty. This early type of sarcophagus was designed to represent the palaces of the Pharaoh reflecting the architecture complete with false doors and windows. By the 11th Dynasty the sarcophagus was designed like a rectangular box. The sarcophagi of the Pharaohs from much later dynasties were shaped to resemble the human form with a carved portrait-head of the Pharaoh. The materials used to make a sarcophagus ranged from stone to metal which included the most magnificent type of sarcophagus made of solid gold.[47]

Funeral Masks

Funerary masks had more than one purpose. They were a part of the elaborate precautions taken by the ancient Egyptians to preserve the body after death. The protection of the head was of primary concern during this process so a face covering was used to preserve the head. This also provided a permanent substitute in an idealized form which presented the deceased in the likeness of an immortal being in case of physical damage. Those of means were provided with both a mask with flesh tones and blue wigs, both associated with the glittering flesh and the lapis lazuli hair of the sun god.[48]

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[46] The Ancient Egyptian Sarcophagus. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.historyembalmed.org/egyptian-mummies/sarcophagus.htm
[47] Ibid.
[48] Egyptian Afterlife. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.crystalinks.com/egyptafterlife.html

The best-known mask is that of Tutankhamun now in the Egyptian Antiquities Museum in Cairo. Made of gold and gems, the mask conveys the features of the ancient ruler. Most funerary masks were not made of solid gold, rather, the most common substance used to make funerary masks was plaster which was then painted with flesh colors.[49]

Masks were a very important aspect of Ancient Egyptian burials. In common with the anthropoid coffin, they provided the dead with a face in the afterlife. In addition, they also helped the spirit to recognize the body.[50]

Masked priests, priestesses, or magicians, disguising themselves as divine beings, such as Anubis or Beset, almost assuredly assumed such identities to exert the powers associated with those deities. Funerary masks and other facial coverings for mummies emphasized the ancient culture.[51]

Mummification

Along with Dracula, Frankenstein's Monster and the Wolfman, the mummy is one of the great figures of the classic horror-movie genre. And it's easy to see why; in a sense, mummies are real-life, tangible ghosts. They are bodies that stick around long after death. The most familiar mummies of course, are the carefully wrapped bodies of ancient Egyptians. However, these figures are only one subsection of the world's mummy population. In the past 200 years, scientists, adventurers and capitalists have discovered ancient mummies in diverse locales all around the world.

What is a Mummy?

A **mummy** is simply a human being whose soft tissue has been preserved long after death. Ordinarily, when a person dies, the **decomposition** process reduces the body to a bare skeleton in a matter of months. The rate of decomposition is dependent on a number of factors, chiefly the nature of the surrounding environment. In most environments, the first

[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

stages of decomposition begin within a few hours. In this initial stage, called autolysis, organs that contain digestive enzymes (the intestines, for example) begin to digest themselves.

Decomposition

Autolysis is followed by putrefaction, the breakdown of organic matter by bacteria. In normal, temperate circumstances, putrefaction begins about three days after death. Within months, the un-embalmed body is reduced to a skeleton and in hotter, more humid environments, this process is accelerated because bacteria reproduce rapidly in such conditions. In colder, drier conditions, the process is slowed because bacteria need heat and water to thrive (this is why we use refrigerators to preserve food). If the conditions are cold or dry enough, or if the environment is so harsh that few bacteria can survive, the body may not fully decompose, possibly for thousands of years.

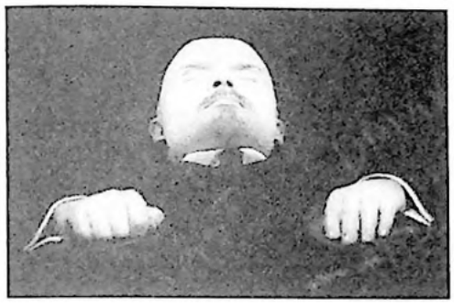
Natural Mummies

There are many circumstances that can lead to such a mummy. In nature, bodies have been preserved in the frozen ice of glaciers, the oxygen-depleted depths of peat bogs and the arid ground of the desert. The **"Iceman,"** discovered in 1991 by tourists in the Italian Alps, is one of the most amazing natural mummies. The 5,300-year-old corpse, found with perfectly preserved tools, died in a rocky hollow that quickly filled up with snow. Essentially, this created a natural freezer that preserved the body's tissues. This mummy has provided historians with a great deal of information about Europe's Copper Age, including representative technology, human health and tattooing practices.[52]

In some cases, natural mummies have significantly altered our concept of history. Mummies found in **China's Taklimakan Desert** have provided several clues to the lineage of modern natives of this region. The structure of the mummies' faces shows they were of Indo-European descent. One man, who lived around 1000 BCE, has a distinctive tattoo on his temple, similar to an ancient symbol for an Indo-Iranian. The region was settled by Indo-European traders, centuries before the Han Chinese arrived in the area. These mummies were created by the hot sand surrounding them in

[52] Harris, T. (2001, April 24). How Mummies Work. Retrieved from http://science.howstuffworks.com/mummy.htm

their graves. When bodies are buried in hot sand, without any protective structure, the sand can absorb the body's fluids, completely desiccating it. This natural mummification process also occurred in the oldest Egyptian graves. When a body was buried in the Egyptian desert, the internal organs were preserved, and the skin was crisped to a dark, hard shell. This phenomenon had a profound effect on the ancient Egyptians: The idea that the human body could survive long past death indicated to them that the human spirit could too. In the next section, we'll see how these early natural mummies led to the Egyptians' infamous artificial mummification process.[53]



Egyptian Mummies

Mummification was practiced throughout most of early Egyptian history. The earliest mummies from prehistoric times were probably accidental. By chance, dry sand and air (since Egypt has almost no measurable rainfall) preserved some bodies buried in shallow pits dug into the sand. **About 2600 BCE, during the Fourth and Fifth Dynasties, Egyptians began to mummify the dead intentionally.** The practice continued and developed for well over 2,000 years into the Roman Period (c. 30 BCE - 364 CE).

Within any one period the quality of the mummification varied, depending on the price paid for it. **The best prepared and preserved mummies are from the 18th through the 20th Dynasties of the New Kingdom (c. 1570 BCE - 1075 BCE) and include those of Tutankhamun and other well-known Pharaohs.**[54]

Modern Mummies

In the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a surge of interest in the mummies of ancient Egypt. **"Unravelings," (taking mummies apart)** were a popular form of entertainment, and people from all classes were fascinated by the beliefs and practices of the Egyptian age. One effect of this phenomenon was that some people began revisiting the idea of mummification - with the addition of some new technology.[55]

The most famous modern mummies are Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the Russian revolutionist, and Eva Peron, the revered wife of Argentinian President Juan Peron. Lenin died in 1924 soon after the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, which influenced the decision to preserve Lenin's body and display it at the Kremlin. The exact chemicals and procedure that keep his body perfectly preserved are a Russian secret, but we do

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[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Egyptian Mummies. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.si.edu/Encyclopedia_SI/nmnh/mummies.htm

know that the mummification is an ongoing process. The Russians periodically immerse him in a preservation bath and then dress him in a waterproof suit to hold the fluids inside.[56]

Like Lenin, Eva Peron's body was so perfectly preserved that she appears to be alive. This was accomplished with a revolutionary embalming treatment that essentially replaced all the fluid in her body with wax. Peron is similar to the mummies you see in a wax museum, except of course that they are not the actual remains of a person.[57]

Plastination

In the 1970s, a group of scientists expanded on this idea to create a process that was called Plastination. In the complicated Plastination process, all of the water and lipids in the body's cells are replaced with polymers. The body takes on the properties of plastic. It is durable, flexible, doesn't have a strong odor and, most importantly, doesn't decompose. Plastination is used to preserve body parts for anatomical research and education, but it is also used artificially. In a controversial exhibit that traveled through Europe and Asia, stripped-down plastinated human bodies were sculpted to wild shapes and positioned in active poses. The exhibit showed all the inner workings of the human body, in both healthy and diseased bodies.[58]

Mummy's Curse

In mummy movies and mummy lore, anybody who disturbs a mummy's tomb incurs its wrath. This idea is based on the actual curses the ancient Egyptians inscribed outside their tombs. These warnings acted as ancient security systems - they were meant to deter tomb-raiders from making off with the deceased's earthly possessions. One typical curse reads, **"As for anybody who shall enter this tomb in his impurity, I shall wring his neck as a bird's."**[59]

In the early 1900s when tomb excavation had reached a fever pitch, people were

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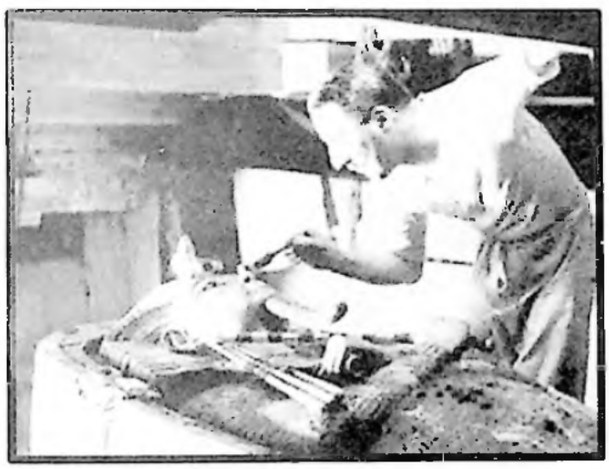
[56] Harris, T. (2001, April 24). How Mummies Work. Retrieved from http://science.howstuffworks.com/mummy.htm
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

fascinated with these ancient curses. The events surrounding **Howard Carter's 1922 excavation of King Tutankhamun's tomb** played a major part in this fascination.

Supposedly, when the crew first entered the tomb, a cobra swallowed Carter's lucky canary. Within seven years eleven members of his team had died, apparently doomed by the mummy's curse. The German microbiologist Gothard Kramer thinks there may be some truth to the ancient curses. Mummies were buried with food for the next world, and over time this food produced loads of mold spores. When archeologists or tomb raiders open up a tomb, these spores kick up into the air and the intruders inhale them. Kramer discovered that some of these ancient mold spores could cause illness or even death, effectively inflicting the promised punishment inscribed on the tomb door.[60]



Disagreement with the Mummy's Curse

"In 2002, the British Medical Journal published a study by Dr. Mark Nelson from Monash University in Australia. He decided to take a statistical look at the people who were actually there, and see if their dates of death actually were accelerated as a result of exposure to any possible curse." He performed an analysis based on medical records of certain groups of people. Nelson focused solely on the Westerners in Carter's party.

Of 44 Westerners present, 25 were exposed to the curse and lived to an average age of 70, those not exposed, lived to 75. Average survival after the date of exposure was 20.8 years for the exposed group, and 28.9 years for the unexposed group. Nelson's conclusion: "There was no significant association between exposure to the mummy's curse and survival and thus no evidence to support the existence of a mummy's curse."[61]

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[60] Ibid

[61] Dunning, Brian. (2008, June 24). King Tut's Curse! Skeptoid Podcast #106/ Retrieved from https://skeptoid.com/episodes/4106

Chapter 3

GREEKS
800 BCE – 146 BCE

Charon taking deceased across River Styx

The Greeks believed that at the moment of death the human spirit, known as the Pneuma, left the body as a little breath or puff of wind. The ancient Greek conception of the afterlife and the ceremonies associated with burial were already well established by the 6th century BCE. In the Odyssey, Homer describes the **Underworld**, deep beneath the earth where Hades, the brother of Zeus and Poseidon, and his wife, Persephone, reigned over countless drifting crowds of shadowy figures – the **"shades"** of all those who had died. It was not a happy place. Indeed, the ghost of the great hero Achilles told Odysseus that he would rather be a poor serf on earth than lord of all the dead in the Underworld.[62]

Ancient Greek burial practices were highly regulated and the Greek funerary ritual consisted of three parts. The funeral allowed for the surviving relatives to show the depth of their familial pride and the strength of their kinship ties. It also provided an opportunity for families to display their wealth and prove their status by staging elaborate funerals and mourning in a public fashion.

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[62] Department of Greek and Roman Art. "Death, Burial, and the Afterlife in Ancient Greece." In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000–. http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dbag/hd_dbag.htm (October 2003)

Fear and respect made it essential to provide a proper final disposition for the deceased. Omissions of proper rites were considered an insult to human dignity. Even Greeks who died on the battlefield, had dust thrown upon their dead bodies, whether friend or foe, to prevent the spirit from following and plaguing passersby.

The son had the particular responsibility to bury his parents; otherwise the duty fell to the closest other family member or friends. Relatives of the deceased, primarily women, conducted the elaborate burial rituals that were customary for each of the three parts: the ***prothesis*** (laying out of the body), the ***ekphora*** (funeral procession and interment of the body or cremated remains of the deceased), and the ***perideipnon*** (funerary banquet.) After being washed and anointed with oil, the body was placed on a high bed within the house. The body was covered with flowers or wreaths and ornaments such as jewelry. Pillows raised the head and the body was positioned with the feet facing the doorway so the spirit knew how to leave.[63]

The Greeks believed that the deceased had to make a journey across the **River Styx** to the land of eternity. A coin was placed in the mouth of the deceased to pay the Ferry-man **Charon** for passage over the river. A **cake of honey** was placed next to the body to appease the three-headed dog, **Cerberus**, who guarded the entrance to Hades. Interment was delayed three days to prevent premature burial. Cremation came into practice in about 300 BCE.

The day after death was set aside for family and friends to pay their last respects to the deceased in his/her home. Disposition took place on the third day. Water itself played a major role in the Greek burial custom; the home of the deceased was marked with a vessel of water which stood outside the door. After the funeral, mourners returned to the home and used this water to purify themselves upon leaving the premises.

On the day of the burial, the deceased was borne to the grave before sunrise in a procession which was required by law to pass quietly through the streets **(ekphora).** Pallbearers carried the body or it was drawn on a cart. Men led the procession with the women following behind.

Graves were never found within the city proper but rather lined the approaching roads. At the gravesite, the body was simply lowered into the grave without much ceremony. Very few objects were actually placed with the body. Drink offerings were made, and after the grave was filled in, it was customary to spread the earth above the

[63] Livingston, H.D. (n.d.). Ancient Greek Burial Traditions and Practices. Retrieved from http://classroom.synonym.com/ancient-greek-burial-traditions-practices-6232.html

grave with fruits and vegetables which purified the ground. This marked the end of the formal ceremony.

Earth mounds, rectangular built tombs, and elaborate marble stelai and statues were often erected to mark the grave and to ensure that the deceased would not be forgotten.[64] For the Greeks, immortality lay in the continued remembrance of the dead by the living. From depictions on pottery, we know that the women of Classical Athens made regular visits to the grave with offerings that included small cakes and drinks.

Six days after the funeral, additional ceremonies took place, and the end of the mourning period, which was not a set time, was also marked with ceremony. Other ceremonies were held on an annual basis thereafter.

Obviously, there is still considerable physical evidence that can be seen and studied to demonstrate how the Greeks honored their dead through burial. The most common grave consisted of tiles that formed a tent-like structure over the body. Small stone markers were often used to designate the place of burial, but round earth mounds and elaborate tombs were also used.

In the case of cremation, metal urns containing the cremains were placed either directly into the ground or within a box for protection and then placed in the ground.

[64] Livingston, H.D. (n.d.). Ancient Greek Burial Traditions and Practices. Retrieved from http://classroom.synonym.com/ancient-greek-burial-traditions-practices-6232.html

Chapter 4

The Roman Funeral
753 BCE – 476 CE

Deceased Roman positioned on a couch for the wake.

The Romans' view of the after-life explains the importance they attached to the ceremonial burial of the dead. The soul, they thought, could find rest only when the body had been duly laid in the grave; until this was done it haunted the home, unhappy itself and bringing unhappiness to others. To perform funeral rites was a solemn religious duty conferred upon surviving members of the family.[65]

There was more than one belief of what happened after death among ancient Romans.

- **Roman Animistic View:** These Romans believed that the soul was a vital principle. The soul at death hovered around the place of burial and required constant attention by the descendants to be happy. Neglect would bring evil upon them.[66]

- **Roman Epicurean View:** These Romans believed that both the body and soul would decompose at the same time. The soul would be in existence as long as the body was still in existence. Once the body decomposed, the soul did as well.

[65] Habenstein, R. Lamers, W. (2014). *The History of American Funeral Directing*. Brookfield, Wisconsin: National Funeral Directors Association.
[66] Ibid.

- **Christian View:** In 380 CE, after **Theodosius** declared Christianity the state religion, the Christian view of what happened after death replaced other views.

  This would be the end of the need to conduct sacrifices and offerings under the Animistic view.[67]

Before 380 CE, Christianity was taking a stronghold in the Roman Empire due to the conversion of **Emperor Constantine** to the Christian religion in 311 CE, after Constantine had a vision of Christ and a cross that told him he would win an upcoming battle. Constantine is also credited with establishing the **Edict of Milan**, which officially ended persecution of Christians. He also established Sumptuary Laws which affected the type of clothing citizens could wear. The Edict also directed that less money should be spent on lavish funerals.

As a Roman citizen was approaching death, relatives and close friends gathered to comfort the dying person and also to display their own grief. The nearest relative would give a last kiss which, it was believed, would catch the soul when it departed the body with the final breath. This same individual would then close the deceased's eyes and would call him by name to ensure that he was actually dead and not just unresponsive. This calling by name would be done at other times throughout the preparation time before burial or cremation took place.

Among the ancient Romans, there was a belief that death contaminated a house and all that belonged to it. Consequently, a sprig of cypress or evergreen was placed on the front of a family residence where a death had recently occurred, as a warning to neighbors, friends and passersby.

Post-death Activities

What took place from this point was determined largely by the deceased's social and financial status. Roman funerals for the rich were elaborate and ritualized events. The life and accomplishments of the deceased were celebrated and homage was paid to his ancestors. The functions of the funeral were carried out by paid functionaries. The head functionary was known as a **Libitinarius,** an undertaker who met with the grieving family to determine their wishes and needs and once this was established, procured the personnel, known as the **Pollinctores**, a class of men who may have been slaves from

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[67] Klicker, Ralph, *Funeral Customs Past and Present*, 1983, Buffalo, New York. (Reprinted with permission, Wilbert Vault Company, Expanding Encyclopedia)

the Temple of Libitina, who performed the laying out of the body and necessary equipment. **Libitina**, was the ancient Roman goddess of corpses and funerals.[68]

The preparation of the body by the **Pollinctores** included washing and anointing with oils and perfumes and dressing the deceased in his/her best clothing. If the deceased held any military or magisterial position, the appropriate uniform and robes were used, otherwise males were dressed in Togas and females in appropriate attire. A coin was placed in the deceased's mouth or hand to fulfill the traditional belief that a person known as **Charon** must be given a fee to pay for his guidance of the soul across the river **Styx** to **Hades**, the place of the after-life.

After the deceased was prepared, the body was positioned on a couch in the vestibule of the house with feet towards the door so the spirit knew how to leave the house. Flowers were often spread around the body to help hide some of the odor of decomposition. Oils and perfumes were also used as needed during the wake.

Wake

The wake could last up to seven days depending on the status of the deceased. During that time family and friends, possibly the entire town, visited the home to pay their respects to the deceased and to comfort the family, much like what happens at today's wakes and visitations. A big difference in the function of wakes from then and now is that it was not unheard of for a person to be declared dead mistakenly. The wake provided time to ensure the person was really dead.

Funeral

In less well-to-do families all the preparation of the deceased as well as any functions needed for a funeral procession or just getting the deceased to the final disposition location, was performed by family members. The Roman funerals of poor were far simpler affairs. The corpse was either buried, which allowed a certain amount of ceremony and sacrifices to be made or, if a family did not have enough money to afford a proper funeral, they simply put the corpse in a casket and threw it in a creek or river where other poor dead people had been thrown.[69] For the wealthy however, all the details for the funeral procession were supervised by the **Designators**. This was no simple task since funeral processions could be elaborate and include many people, several of whom were paid actors, musicians, and torch-bearers who were needed because funerals were held in the evening so as not to disrupt the normal functions of

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[68] Toynbee, J. (1971) Funerary Rites and the Cult of the Dead. In Death and Burial in the Roman Worlds (pp.43-72). Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press

[69] History of Roman Funerals, (n.d.). Retrieved from http://thefuneralsource.org/hi0501.html

the town or city. The term funeral comes from the Latin word **funeralis**, meaning torch light parade.

The deceased was carried out of the house feet first while still lying on the couch. The couch was placed on a bier which was carried by the closest family members or slaves who were freed by their master before his/her death; they were known as **freemen**.[70]

There were usually two types of funeral options for the wealthy; **funus publicum**, meaning a public funeral and **funus privatum**, a private funeral. A **Praeco**, a special funeral functionary, would summon participants to a public funeral. A private funeral, however, had no public invitation extended. Today the death notice in the paper notifies the public if a funeral is open to the public or is to be held in private.

Procession

The order of the funeral procession was regulated by the **Designator** also known as **Dominus Funeris.** It was headed by musicians of various kinds who played mournful songs. Next came mourning women, called **Praeficae** who were hired as professional mourners to lament, shriek, tear their hair, rend their garments and sing the funeral song in praise of the deceased. These were sometimes followed by players and buffoons of whom one, called **Archimimus**, represented the character of the deceased and imitated his words and actions. Then came the slaves whom the deceased had liberated wearing the cap of liberty. The number of these slaves was occasionally very great, since a master sometimes liberated all his slaves in his will in order to add to the pomp of his funeral. Ahead of the deceased walked individuals wearing waxen masks made to represent the deceased, and clothed in the official garments of those whom they represented. Crowns or military rewards which the deceased had earned in life were also carried in the procession.[71]

Funeral Oration

The relations of the deceased walked behind the body in mourning; his sons with their heads veiled, and daughters with their heads bare and their hair disheveled, contrary to the usual practices of both. They often uttered loud lamentations, and the women beat their breasts and their cheeks. If the deceased was of illustrious rank, the funeral procession went through the forum and stopped before the rostra, where a funeral oration in praise of the deceased (man or woman) was delivered. This practice was of great antiquity among the Romans. From the forum, the procession proceeded

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[70] Klicker, Ralph, Funeral Customs Past and Present, 1983, Buffalo, New York. (Reprinted with permission, Wilbert Vault Company, Expanding Encyclopedia)

[71] Roman and Early Christian Burial Practices. (n.d.). retrieved from http://www.mcah.columbia.edu/courses/medmil/pages/non-mma-pages/text_links/burialpractices

to the place of burning or burial, which according to a law, was outside the city, also known as an extramural burial or cremation.[72]

Both burials and cremation were accepted forms of disposition, and all burials, whether bodies or ashes, took place outside the city. The Emperor and children less than 40 days old were the only exceptions to this law. Cremation was used until the 2nd century, and then burial came into use. When the funeral procession arrived at the gravesite, an essential rite, the throwing of a small quantity of earth on the deceased, was immediately performed. Additionally, in the case of cremation, a small piece of the body would be removed for burial. The poor were usually laid directly into the earth while the wealthy were placed in ornamental sarcophagi before burial or placement in chamber tombs.

Strict procedures controlled cremations. A pyre was constructed in the shape of an altar. The corpse and the couch on which it lay were placed on the pyre with the eyes of the corpse open. Prior to lighting the fire, a funeral oration was delivered by the nearest relative after which everyone in attendance circled the pyre three times and called out the name of the deceased. This was known as **Conclamatio Mortis**, the climax of death. Next, the fire was lit by the nearest relative with the addition of perfumes and spices thrown on the blaze.[73]

When the blaze ended, the hot embers were extinguished with wine. The ashes were collected and put in an urn known as **urna**, which was kept in the family mausoleum. There were various kinds of urnas including lead canisters, chests, glass vessels and earthenware pots. Some of these containers were left standing in the tomb, others were buried. Before the relatives and friends left the cremation site, they would step over the fire site as a part of a purification process. To complete the purification, water was thrown upon the mourners by a priest. Food and drink offerings were left at the sight.[74]

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[72] Ibid.
[73] VanBeck, Todd, The Funeral Gospel, ICCFA
[74] Alchin, L. (n.d.). Roman Empire and Colosseum. Retrieved from http://www.tribunesandtriumphs.org/roman-life/roman-funerals.htm

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A walk through time : a history of burial

SUPPORTIVE READINGS

Modern Embalming 1897

The Text of this article is from The Champion Text Book on Embalming

by Dr. E. Myers and Professor F. A. Sullivan, 1897

Great progress has been made in embalming during the present century (19th), and earlier methods have given way to more modern and enlightened ones. Which one of the early modern embalmers justly merits the title of father of the present system matters but little, for like every form of advancement it has had growth and development, and the methods of none of these forerunners have survived, at least in this country; only their investigations led in new channels, resulting ultimately in the prevailing methods.

The processes explained in this chapter are exclusively European.

Dr. Frederic Ruysch, who occupied the chair of anatomy at Amsterdam, Holland, during the closing of the third part of the seventeenth, and early years of the eighteenth centuries (1665-1717), was probably the first to practice a successful system of arterial injection, which, however, he used only in preparing specimens for his anatomical work. He did not stop with a simple injection of the arteries, but after permitting the body to remain for some hours to allow diffusion of the fluid through the structures, he proceeded to lay open the body as in making a post-mortem examination.

The viscera of the chest and abdomen were removed, and the fluid in them sponged out. The organs were then steeped in spirits of wine, replaced, and covered with a preservative solution. He brought his method of preserving dead bodies to such extreme perfection that his specimens were the wonder of his generation, and indeed of later ones. Peter the Great, who was among the distinguished personages to inspect his work, possibly paid the highest compliment to his art, by kissing the life-like lips of a child, preserved by the great anatomist, without at first discovering the fact that the lips were those of the dead.

Dr. Ruysch's method is said to have preserved the natural color of the body, as well as the form and suppleness of the limbs. However, he neglected to take the world, or other scientists, into his confidence; hence, but little if anything is known as to the chemicals used by him, or the manner of injection. His discoveries were, consequently, lost to science. For this reason, others, whose methods were published to the world, have been considered by many as better entitled to the honor naturally accruing from a great discovery.

Dr. William Hunter, an eminent Scottish physician, anatomist and physiologist of the last century (1718-1783), is by many given the credit of being the original inventor of the injection method. Unlike Dr. Ruysch he published his plan of injection in minute detail. The artery usually selected by him was the femoral. His solution was composed of oil of turpentine, five pints; Venice turpentine, one fluid pint; oil of lavender, two fluid ounces; oil of rosemary, two fluid ounces; and vermillion. This was forced into the vessels until it reached over the whole body, giving the skin a general reddish appearance. As in Dr. Ruysch's method, complete diffusion of the fluid, through the minute vessels of the body, was secured by leaving the body untouched for a time. The body was then opened, the thoracic and abdominal organs were removed, emptied, and cleaned, their vessels injected with the fluid, and the organs steeped in camphorated spirits of wine. The cavities were washed with the camphorated spirits, the viscera were replaced, and the intervening spaces were filled with a powder composed of camphor, rosin and niter. This powder was also placed in the mouth, nostrils and other external cavities, and the body was rubbed over with essential oils of rosemary and lavender. The final operation consisted in placing the body thus prepared in a coffin upon a bed of dry plaster of Paris, placed there to extract all moisture from the body. The coffin was then closed for four years, when it was opened. Another bed of the plaster was added at that time, in case desiccation had not been complete.

John Hunter, a younger brother of William, was but little less renowned along the same lines, and also helped greatly to advance the science of embalming, devoting much attention to experiments with various preparations. The Hunterian Method was practiced with or without modification by many succeeding British anatomists.

Dr. Matthew Baillie, instead of removing the intestines or other viscera, injected the preserving fluid into the stomach, rectum and lungs, after having made a complete injection of the arterial system. Dr. Sheldon used as his preservative fluid, camphor dissolved in spirits, in the proportion of one ounce of camphor to six of spirits. He removed the viscera and coated them and the visceral cavities with tar, enveloping the body with a tarred sheet. His method is said to have been successful. Joshua Brooks, the last of the great English anatomists having a distinctive school of anatomy of his own, practiced the Hunterian method but slight if any modifications.

M. Boudet's process was a modification of the Egyptian, he being one of the last to follow ancient methods as well as the first to use corrosive sublimate as a preservative. He embalmed with tan, salt, asphalt, Peruvian bark, camphor, cinnamon, and other aromatics, and corrosive sublimate. He also completely enveloped the body in bandages, varnish being coated over the body and cavities, and outer bandage.

N. Franchini's process consisted of injecting the arteries through the common carotid artery with a solution consisting of eight decigrams of arsenious acid combined with a small quantity of cinnabar, dissolved in nine kilograms of spirits of wine. By this method bodies could be kept odorless and natural in color for sixty days, after which they began to desiccate, and would mummify so as to last for all time.

Jean Nicholas Gannal (1791-1882), a shrewd and progressive French chemist, introduced a new system of merit in the 30s of the 19th century. He was able to preserve a body thirty to sixty days by using a solution of one kilogram of sulphate of alumina to five liters of water. In injecting he used one of the carotids, injecting downwards. Later he found it necessary to open the abdomen, in order to relieve the stomach and bowels of gas.

M. Gannal's secret formula, which he claimed contained arsenic, on being analyzed by a governmental commission, was found to contain that substance. Embalming with arsenious solutions having become common in France in Louis Philippi's time, the government interfered and prohibited the sale of arsenic and all compositions containing it for embalming bodies, as well as for several other uses. The further use of M. Gannal's solution was therefore stopped.

M. Sucquet, in a contest before a board of prominent French physicians in which **M. Gannal, Dupre** and others participated, won a signal victory for his method, using a non-arsenic preparation. His solution was composed chiefly of chloride of zinc which he injected arterially. M. Dupre made use of carbonic and sulphurous gasses and M. Gannel injected a solution composed of equal parts of the sulphate and the chloride of alumina, at a density of 34 degrees. Bodies prepared according to these processes, in the presence of the body of physicians mentioned, were buried for fourteen months, when they were disinterred in the presence of the same commission. M. Gannal's subject was found to have undergone putrefaction, while the one prepared by M. Sucquet was in excellent state of preservation. The latter body, on exposure to the air, without showing any signs of putrefaction, dried to a state of hardness, little short of that of wood or stone. In consequence of the remarkable success of M. Sucquet's method, it came into extensive use on the continent of Europe and to a considerable extent in this country.

M. Falcony had a desiccatory process which mummified the body, gave it a yellow appearance, but well preserved it without any mutilation or injection by simply placing the body in a bed of dry sawdust to which powdered zinc sulphate had been added. Bodies so preserved remained flexible for forty days, after which they began to dry up, though still retaining their natural color. Others practiced this system with remarkable success.

Franciolla's method was not greatly different from some of the others given. The formula used by him was as follows: Arsenious acid, four ounces; carbonate of potash, two ounces; powdered alum, eight ounces. The acid and potash were dissolved by boiling in three quarts of water, the alum added, and the whole diluted by the addition of water until it made one gallon of the preparation. He opened the abdomen, emptied the stomach and other organs, washed, dried and injected them; then injected the bronchial tubes by puncturing the trachea. For arterial injection the right common carotid artery was selected, the blood being removed from the veins by puncturing the inferior vena cava before the abdomen was cleansed, and was removed by a sponge or pump. He poured a solution over the bowels before replacing them; a strong solution of bichromate of potash being sometimes used, though not with the best of satisfaction. He also advocated filling the abdominal and thoracic cavities with a liquid preparation of cornstarch, water, alcohol and corrosive sublimate, which, after hardening, would prevent the sinking of the parts.

Brunetti, another Italian, used a method, which it is claimed, preserved bodies so that they resisted decay for hundreds of years, but they became hard as stone and were of course useless for anatomical study. They however, retained their form and size in a remarkable degree. By this process the circulatory system was thoroughly cleansed by washing from two to five hours with cold water until it issued from the body looking clear. Alcohol was then injected to remove the water, and sulphuric ether to carry out of the system all fatty and greasy substances, these operations occupying five to ten hours. Equal time was spent in injecting a strong solution of tannin, after which the body was dried by means of a current of warm air which had been passed over heated chloride of calcium.

Dr. Tscheirnoff's method was as interesting as it was thorough, but its necessary expensiveness was fatal to its general use. The mutilation of the body, incident to this method, also detracted from its popularity. He first opened the abdomen, by making an incision extending from the sternum to the umbilical region, with a short cross incision about midway. This gave a diamond-shaped opening exposing the abdominal viscera. Entrance to the thoracic cavity was gained by carefully cutting the ribs loose from the sternum and turning the latter back over the face. This exposed to view the heart, lungs and aortal arch. The next step was to displace the bowels and sponge out all the fluid or serum found around the intestines. The intestines and other internal organs, whose contents were liable to putrefaction, were emptied, the bladder being vacated through the urinary canal by means of a catheter; after which they were injected with fluid. He then injected the arteries through the descending aorta, which was exposed by moving the small intestine to the right, to be replaced on completion of the operation.

This did not complete the surgical part of the process, for the back of the skull was trepanned, making a two-inch circular hole, through which the brain, or as much of it as could be reached, was removed by means of a long-handled, slender, specially-made spoon. This cavity was filled with a thin paste made by fully saturating a half gallon of water with alum, and thickening to the proper consistency by the addition of plaster of Paris; the wound was then carefully closed and sewed up. The thoracic and abdominal cavities and their contents were washed and dried and the viscera surrounded with tannic acid. The sternum was then replaced and the wound temporarily closed and the body completely enveloped in a sheet saturated with fluid, in which condition it was left for twelve hours.

The envelope was then removed, the cavities of the thorax and abdomen reopened, and the plaster of Paris and alum paste, mentioned above, was poured over and around the viscera, filling all the space to the level of the ribs. After the paste set, tannic acid was sprinkled over the top, the sternum was replaced and the wound permanently and carefully sewed up. The inside of the mouth was filled with cotton saturated with embalming fluid in order that the face should retain its fullness; the nose cavity was also filled with paste. The entire body was finally coated with a preparation of Canada balsam and turpentine, which is transparent and excludes the air.

Embalming but Little Practiced Today in England, 1897. Singularly enough, while the English in the later portion of the last, and first of the 19th century, made such wonderful progress in embalming, the art is but little practiced today in that country; and then generally for others than natives of Great Britain - especially Americans. The late Dr. Benjamin Ward Richardson, F.R.C.S., in his work on "The Art of Embalming," said:

"Embalming at the present day is, in England, an exceptional process, and when we are called upon to perform it here, it is, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, for some one foreign to our country. I have embalmed fifty bodies, but only in two or three instances the bodies of English people, and in these exceptional instances the deceased, although they were born and died in England, had lived the greater part of their life abroad, and were embalmed in order to be conveyed to friends at a distance, who wished to bury them."

A recent letter from Mr. Halford Lupton Mills, Cambridge Place, Norfolk Square, Paddington, London, West, who is said to be the only British undertaker holding a diploma from an American School of Embalming, reaffirms this statement from both personal experience and observation.

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American Death and Burial Custom Derivation from Medieval European Cultures

Hope of an Afterlife

The Middle Ages view of death in the Western world was one of acceptance, one in which people viewed death as part of the natural law and process of God's law at work in the world. In St. Augustine's *City of God,* Book I, Chapter 11, is found the following: "**All these ceremonies concerning the dead, the care of the burial, the fashions of the sepulchers, the pomp of the funerals, are rather solaces to the living than furtherance to the dead.**"[338]

In medieval Britain before Reformation we find that shrouds were utilized almost universally from the richest to the poorest, although many of the richer classes were buried in elaborate and elegant garments. Even among the poorest class, babies who died before the age of one month were buried in swaddling clothes. The shrouds were usually of linen and were wrapped and tied at the top and bottom. For the poor often a sheet from the house supply was utilized in place of a linen shroud, and the body was put into the grave thusly with the body tied inside the sheet. Some brides even included a shroud in their trousseaus. This was also the case for children. This practice was due to the high death rate of both young wives and babies at the time of childbirth.

Poor Clothed, Fed and Paid

It was customary to use poor people as part of the body of mourners. It was good and laudable to remember them at one's death, and the family bought the poor clothes to wear for the ceremonial procession and funeral and fed them a mourning meal. **Paupers' funerals** were paid for by the parish from a tax or rate levied on all property owners. Food and drink were also provided by the parish at pauper funerals. Even unknown strangers were given the same burial. Food and drink was a vital ritual whereby, the community coped with the death, and this continues today. **Poors holes** or **Poors graves** were holes or pits dug in the churchyard (due to the lack of space). Coffins three or four across and up to six or seven deep were stacked for the paupers. The Poors holes or graves were then filled and another pit was dug.

A **charnel house** was often maintained in the smallest village church and in large cathedrals. This was a subterranean chamber where bones were placed when disturbed by interments in the churchyard. Burial was nearly always done in the churchyard, and when the churchyard became completely filled with graves, the oldest

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[338] Welford, J. Mack, (n.d.), Burial Custom Derivation, "American Death and Burial Custom Derivation from Medieval European Cultures," retrieved March 22, 2016 from http://www.nyu.edu/classes/gmoran/WELFORD.pdf

graves were often disinterred, and the bones kept in the charnel house due to the Christian teaching or belief in the physical resurrection of the body and the consequent necessity that the bones or whatever remained of the physical body must be kept intact in the hope of that physical resurrection.

There were often parochial guilds and fraternities organized to arrange and service the funeral procession. They kept the parish coffin, the pall, mourning cloaks, candles, hearses, and, for the impoverished, also paid the mass fee to the priest. They also arranged the funeral feast that followed the burial ceremonies and burial itself. The laying out and preparation of the body was the responsibility of the family. Issuing of the mourning candles to mourners began to decline in the early 1500s, but it was reintroduced in the late 1600s for nighttime funerals. A parish coffin was utilized for the poor until the mid-seventeenth century.

This coffin was used to "lay out" the body for the wake or watch over the body during the night prior to the funeral itself, and the body was removed at the graveside and generally placed into the ground wrapped in a linen shroud or sheet and covered with dirt. The coffin was used again and again. Mourning clothes were used during the Middle Ages, but their use declined in the late 1500s. A chief mourner was designated, usually a close relative or close family friend. The chief mourner led the funeral processions and was generally the most elegantly dressed of those attending the funeral rites. One's funeral rites depended entirely on one's status.

Sitting beside the coffin, some people would eat and drink, some would drink and smoke, and often during a day or two of the **"wake",** there would be sports and mimical plays held in honor of the dead person. White was the mourning color for bachelors and virgins, children, and women dying in childbirth. The mourning color for all others was black. The sound of bells was important to mark the funeral.

Coffin: A Status Symbol

To some, coffins were and still are status symbols. No thirteenth, fourteenth, or fifteenth century peasant or artisan expected to be buried in a coffin. By contrast, no nobleman would have been subjected to shroud burial in a churchyard. Introduction of the **reusable parish coffin** in the 1400s was a marked improvement, but it was abandoned in the 1600s due to the Black Death, pestilence and plague. The body of a rich person was often put in a lead body coffin or vault interment from the 1400s to the 1600s, and then sometimes was put into a wooden coffin as well. The funeral furnishing trade was firmly established by the early 1700s and supplied coffins.

Renouard Tenets

Ideals of 71 Years Ago as Expressed by Dr. Auguste Renouard

This article, circa 1890, is taken from Dr. Auguste Renouard's book, The Undertaker's Manual, 1878

After seventy-one years, it falls to us to commemorate the great contributions to embalming and mortuary service made by Dr. Auguste Renouard in the book published in that year, known as **The Undertaker's Manual.** Though it has been out of print for many years, a few copies still remain in the possession of some of the older men in this profession.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was an immense expansion of knowledge, springing directly from his work, and forming ultimately a vast superstructure based on the Renouard concepts of anatomy, chemistry, bacteriology, embalming and mortuary education. Since 1876, the progress of mortuary science has continued, but the development of embalming and mortuary culture has changed in character, and it seems to have become subservient and radical, questioning the traditional assumptions and uprooting the old formations. We have therefore come to the end of an age of early classical embalming and undertaking culture, which we may count as having extended from the publication of **Renouard's principia** in 1878 to the acceptance of what we term modern mortuary service. The Renouard fundamental assumptions will be found similar to those that we are striving for today upon reading the following inculcations of Dr. Renouard as advocated by him in 1878:

> **"*How can the embalmer,*" he asked, *"find the point of injection, or go on with his work, if he be totally ignorant of the places of the different organs, the courses of the veins and arteries, their relations and relative positions? It is, then, an undeniable fact, that without this knowledge, the embalmer will accomplish his task more or less well, and without knowing with any degree of certainty if the process of injecting is complete, or if the parts intended to be injected have been reached by the fluid."***

Closely allied to this are the conditions of the body after death, as governed by circumstances which may affect it, and thereby modify the treatment thereof, admitting that different modes of treatment are required by different cases. How, then, is the undertaker to discriminate, if he be not warned beforehand, or if his knowledge does not teach him what course is best to follow? And how is this knowledge to be gained if he has not made it a point to study at least that part of the human organism with which he may have to deal?

What has been said about anatomy applies equally well to the study of animal chemistry. The constituents of the human body, fluid and solid, have all more or less different properties, as also their composition varies to a great extent. It is, therefore, a point of material importance for undertakers to know and understand their formation, the causes which may accelerate their decay or putrefaction, and also the means which may be employed to the best advantage to counteract their tendency to disintegration.

The public at large have but a very imperfect idea of the dangerous, and even, in some cases, repulsive, character of our profession. To a great many the business of the undertaker has something dreadful and appalling about it; and without very well understanding themselves the nature of the feelings, it is always associated with the horrible. Undertakers as a class, are men useful to society; their calling, far from being horrible and loathsome, as the ignorant and simple-minded are pleased to call it, is one which requires a great deal of self-denial, and which often brings to the surface, the finest traits of human nature.

Granted, that our profession is one fraught with dangers, it becomes incumbent upon professionals to protect themselves against them by all the means that knowledge, experience and science may suggest. One great mistake and one which has been repeated too often, is the false security some may place in the use of strong liquors to combat and render void the deadly effects of contagion. This has been a stumbling block to many, and without incurring the accusation of being a fanatic in regard to temperance, we may safely assert that a great many of our professionals have fallen victims to the effects of alcohol, which, being used at first as a sort of medicinal preventative, soon assumes full sway over the mind, and baffles their best efforts to resist it.

If we are to look anywhere for a preventative of contagion and infection, we must look to the directions and remedies which medical science holds in store; and also to the undisputable fact, that in the caution used and the care exercised in handling bodies, assisted by a discriminate judgement, lies our best pledge of safety.

A Good Assistant

We have stated at the commencement of this work that every man cannot be an undertaker; it is equally true, also, that every man cannot fill with credit and satisfactorily the position of an undertaker. As a good, efficient assistant can, to a great extent enhance the repute and promote the interest of his employer, so it is that a careless, inattentive, self-conceited man may and will cause harm in the same ratio.

A first class assistant should consider the interest of his employer as closely as his own as though they were so in fact, and perform his duties outside of the store with as much promptitude, thoroughness, and correctness of deportment as if he were under

the immediate supervision of his employer. A slovenly appearance in public should be guarded against; and a man who does not care for his personal appearance seldom possesses much regard for anything else; moreover, it is not beneficial to the establishment with which he may be connected.

Trustworthiness is also to be looked after in such parties, not only so far as immediate honesty is concerned, but also in the punctual discharge of his duties. The profession of an undertaker is confining and exceptional in its nature, and requires constant attention. Pleasure and amusements are a secondary consideration; and any man accustomed to self-indulgence in the above to any extent should scrupulously keep out of the business, and select some other means of livelihood more congenial to his tastes. As an assistant may be called upon to exercise his functions at any hour of the day or night, he must be ready, and constantly so to answer any call made upon his services.

An assistant should also enjoy sound health and a strong constitution, as the strain upon his physical powers may be placed to a severe test at times. He should be a man of some social standing, and be a thorough master of his profession, as he may at times be called upon to officiate instead of his employer, and any show of ignorance or neglect on his part will not only be a stigma upon himself, but will also reflect upon the name of the party whom he may be serving.

An ill-mannered, boorish assistant is a plague to any establishment, so is also the self-conceited, foppish, ignorant one. The first is liable to give offense by the rudeness of his speech and manners, the last will surely alienate the good will of patrons by his overbearing demeanor and shallow pretensions to a knowledge which he does not really possess.

A good assistant should know all that pertains to his business, not in a superficial and light manner, but in thorough and complete fashion. He must be able to not only line a casket, but manufacture his own lining if necessary, to take charge of all the details of a funeral, assisting physicians in a post-mortem examination if required to do so; or properly embalm a corpse. On the other hand, it must be conceded that such a man as I have described is a valuable one for an assistant and ought to receive a generous remuneration, and also be made to feel that he is appreciated.

My effort in this little volume has been to offer to my professional brethren the means employed by the most eminent chemists, both in this country and Europe, to preserve bodies, and the methods given are the best known to modern science. I have also tried to make them feel aware of the necessity of knowledge, and shall feel happy if by so doing I have helped to raise our profession to the standard it really deserves.

Colonial Funeral and Burial Customs

by
Alice Morse Earle

Chapter 15 from her book, Customs and Fashions in Old New England

The earliest New Englanders had no religious services at a funeral. Not wishing to "confirm the popish error that prayer is to be used for the dead or over the dead," they said no words, either of grief, resignation, or faith, but followed the coffin and filled the grave in silence. Lechford has given us a picture of a funeral in New England in the seventeenth century, which is full of simple dignity, if not of sympathy:

> ***"At Burials nothing is read, nor any funeral sermon made, but all the neighborhood or a goodly company of them come together by tolling of the bell, and carry the dead solemnly to his grave, and then stand by him while he is buried. The ministers are most commonly present."***

As was the fashion in England at that date, laudatory verses and sentences were fastened to the bier or herse. The name herse was then applied to the draped catafalque or platform upon which the candles stood and the coffin rested. The publication of mourning broadsides and pamphlets, black-bordered and dismal, was a large duty of the early colonial press. They were often decorated gruesomely with skull and crossbones, scythes, coffins, and hour-glasses, all-seeing eyes with rakish squints, bow-legged skeletons, and miserable little rosetted winding-sheets.

Colonial Pallbearers

There were, as a rule, two sets of bearers appointed; **under-bearers**, usually young men, who carried the coffin on a bier, and **pall-bearers**, men of age, dignity, or consanguinity, who held the corners of the pall which was spread over the coffin and hung down over the heads and bodies of the under-bearers. As the coffin was sometimes carried for a long distance, there were frequently appointed a double set of under-bearers, to share the burden. I have been told that **mort-stones** were set by the wayside in some towns, upon which the bearers could rest the heavy coffin for a short time on their way to the burial place, but I find no record or proof of this statement. The pall, or **bier-cloth**, or **mort-cloth**, as it was called, was usually bought and owned by the town, and was of **heavy purple**, or **black broadcloth**, or **velvet**. It often was kept with the bier in the porch of the meeting-house; but in some communities the bier, a simple shelf or table of wood on four legs about a foot and a half long, was placed over the freshly filled-in grave and left somberly waiting till it was needed to carry another coffin to the burial-place. In many towns there were no gravediggers; sympathizing

friends made the simple coffin and dug the grave.

In Londonderry, N.H., and neighboring towns that had been settled by Scotch-Irish planters, the announcement of a death was a signal for cessation of daily work throughout the neighborhood. Kindly assistance was at once given at the house of mourning. Women flocked to do the household work and to prepare the funeral feast. Men brought gifts of food, or household necessities, and rendered all the advice and help that was needed. A gathering was held the night before the funeral, which in feasting and drinking partook somewhat of the nature of an Irish wake. Much New England rum was consumed at this gathering, and also before the procession to the grave, and after the interment the whole party returned to the house for an **"arval,"** and drank again. The funeral rum-bill was often an embarrassing and hampering expense to a bereaved family for years.

This liberal serving of intoxicating liquor at a funeral was not peculiar to these New Hampshire towns, nor to the Scotch-Irish, but prevailed in every settlement in the colonies until the temperance-awakening days of this century. Throughout New England bills for funeral baked meats were large in items of rum, cider, whiskey, lemons, sugar, spices.

To show how universally liquor was served to all who had to do with a funeral, let me give the bill for the mortuary expenses of David Porter, of Hartford, who was drowned in 1678.

"By a pint of liquor for those who dived for him.....	1s.
By a quart of liquor for those who bro't him home.....	2s.
By two quarts of wine & 1 gallon of cyder to jury of inquest	5s.
By 8 gallons & 3 qts. wine for funeral.....	£1 15s.
By Barrel cyder for funeral	16s.
1 coffin.....	12s.
Winding-sheet	18s."

Even town paupers had two or three gallons of rum or a barrel of cider given by the town to serve as speeding libations at their un-mourned funerals. The liquor at the funeral of a minister was usually paid for by the church or town — often interchangeable terms for the same body. The parish frequently gave, also, as in the case of the death of Rev. Job Strong, of Portsmouth, in 1751, "the widow of our deceased pastor a full suit of

mourning."

A careful, and above all an experienced committee was appointed to superintend the mixing of the funeral grog or punch, and to attend to the liberal and frequent dispensing thereof.

Hawthorne was so impressed with the enjoyable reunion New Englanders found in funerals that he wrote of them:

> ***"They were the only class of scenes, so far as my investigation has taught me, in which our ancestors were wont to steep their tough old hearts in wine and strong drink and indulge in an outbreak of grisly jollity.***
>
> ***Look back through all the social customs of New England in the first century of her existence and read all her traits of character, and find one occasion other than a funeral feast where jollity was sanctioned by universal practice. . . Well, old friends! Pass on with your burden of mortality and lay it in the tomb with jolly hearts. People should be permitted to enjoy themselves in their own fashion; every man to his taste — but New England must have been a dismal abode for the man of pleasure when the only boon-companion was Death."***

This picture has been given by Sargent of country funerals in the days of his youth:

> ***"When I was a boy, and was at an academy in the country, everybody went to everybody's funeral in the village. The population was small, funerals rare; the preceptor's absence would have excited remark, and the boys were dismissed for the funeral. A table with liquors was always provided. Everyone, as he entered, took off his hat with his left hand, smoothed down his hair with his right, walked up to the coffin, gazed upon the corpse, made a crooked face, passed on to the table, took a glass of his favorite liquor, went forth upon the plat before the house and talked politics, or of the new road, or compared crops, or swapped heifers or horses until it was time to lift. A clergyman told me that when settled at Concord, N.H., he officiated at the funeral of a little boy. The body was borne in a chaise, and six little nominal pallbearers, the oldest not thirteen, walked by the side of the vehicle. Before they left the house a sort of master of ceremonies took them to the table and mixed a tumbler of gin, water, and sugar for each."***

It was a hard struggle against established customs and ideas of hospitality, and even of health, when the use of liquor at funerals was abolished. Old people sadly deplored the present and regretted the past. One worthy old gentleman said, with much bitterness: *"Temperance has done for funerals."*

As soon as the larger cities began to accrue wealth, the parentations of men and women of high station were celebrated with much pomp and dignity, if not with religious exercises. Volleys were fired over the freshly made grave — even of a woman. A barrel and a half of powder was consumed to do proper honor to Winthrop, the chief founder of Massachusetts. At the funeral of Deputy-Governor Francis Willoughby eleven companies of militia were in attendance, and "with the doleful noise of trumpets and drums, in their mourning posture, three thundering volleys of shot were discharged, answered with the loud roaring of great guns rending the heavens with noise at the loss of so great a man."

When Governor Leverett died, in 1679, the bearers carried banners. The principal men of the town bore the armor of the deceased, from helmet to spur, and the Governor's horse was led with banners. The funeral-recording Sewall has left us many a picture of the pomp of burial. Colonel Samuel Shrimpton was buried "with Arms" in 1697, "Ten Companies, No Herse nor Trumpet but a horse Led. Mourning Coach also & Horses in Mourning, Scutcheons on their sides and Deaths Heads on their foreheads." Fancy those coach-horses with gloomy death's-heads on their foreheads. At the funeral of Lady Andros, which was held in church, six "mourning women" sat in front of the draped pulpit, and the hearse was drawn by six horses. This English fashion of paid mourners was not common among sincere New Englanders; Lady Andros was a Church of England woman, not a Puritan. The cloth from the pulpit was usually given, after the burial, to the minister. In 1736 the *Boston News Letter* tells of the pulpit and the pew of the deceased being richly draped and adorned with escutcheons at a funeral. Thus, were New England men, to quote Sir Thomas Browne, "*splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave*."

Many local customs prevailed. In Hartford and neighboring towns all ornaments, mirrors, and pictures were muffled with napkins and cloths at the time of the funerals, and sometimes the window-shutters were kept closed in the front of the house and tied together with black for a year, as was the fashion in Philadelphia.

Hawthorne tells us that at the death of Sir William Pepperell the entire house was hung with black, and all the family portraits were covered with black crape.

The order of procession to the grave was a matter of much etiquette. High respect and equally deep slights might be rendered to mourners in the place

assigned. Usually some magistrate or person of dignity walked with the widow. Judge Sewall often speaks of "*leading the widow in a mourning cloak.*"

Gloves

One great expense of a funeral was the gloves. In some communities these were sent as an approved and elegant form of invitation to relatives and friends and dignitaries, whose presence was desired. Occasionally, a printed "invitation to follow the corps" was also sent. At the funeral of the wife of Governor Belcher, in 1736, over one thousand pairs of gloves were given away; at the funeral of Andrew Faneuil three thousand pairs; the number frequently ran up to several hundred. Different qualities of gloves were presented at the same funeral to persons of different social circles, or of varied degrees of consanguinity or acquaintance.

Rings

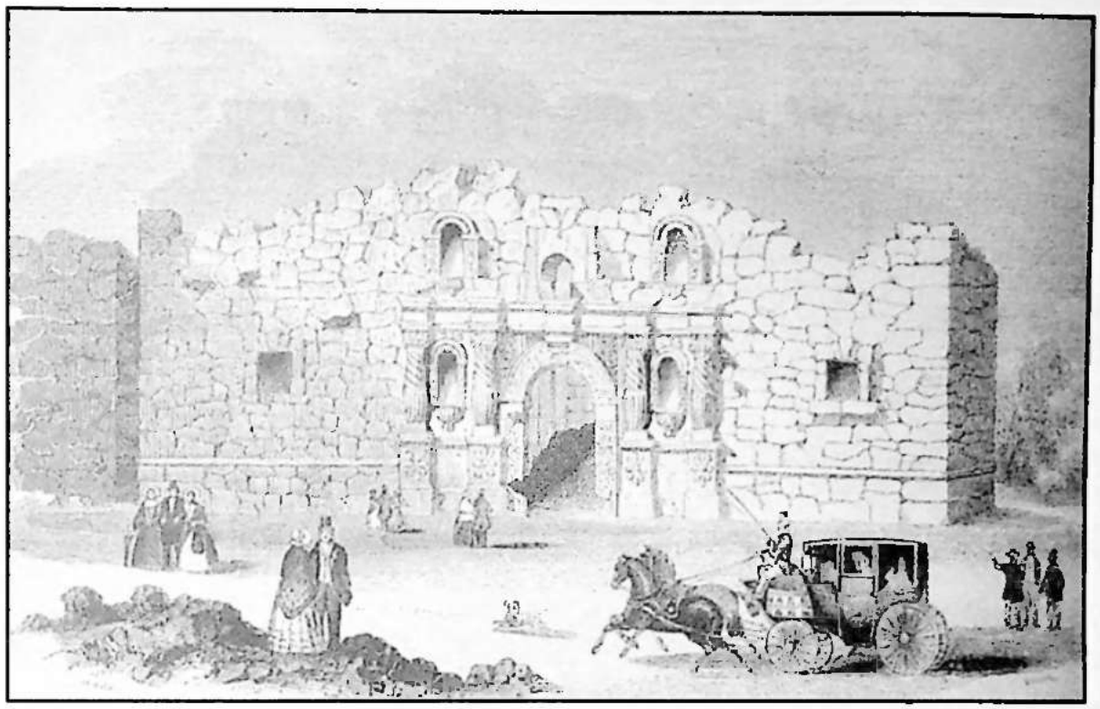
Rings were given at funerals, especially in wealthy families, to near relatives and persons of note in the community. Sewall records in his diary, in the years from 1687 to 1725, the receiving of no less than fifty-seven mourning rings. At one Boston funeral, in 1738, over two hundred rings were given away. At Waitstill Winthrop's funeral, sixty rings worth over a pound apiece, were given to friends. The entire expense of the latter-named funeral — scutcheons, hatchments, scarves, gloves, rings, bell-tolling, tailor's bills, etc., was over six hundred pounds. This amounted to one-fifth of the entire estate of the deceased gentleman.

These mourning rings were of gold, usually enameled in black, or black and white. They were frequently decorated with a death's-head or with a coffin with a full-length skeleton lying in it, or with a winged skull. Sometimes they held a framed lock of hair of the deceased friend. Sometimes the ring was shaped like a serpent with his tail in his mouth.

A favorite motto for these rings was: "Death parts United Hearts." Another was the legend: "Death conquers all;" another, "Prepare for Death;" still another, "Prepared be to follow me." Other funeral rings bore a family crest in black enamel.

Goldsmiths kept these mourning rings constantly on hand. "Deaths Head Rings" and "Burying Rings" appear in many newspaper advertisements. When bought for use the name or initials of the dead person, and the date of his death, were engraved upon the ring. This was called fashioning. It is also evident from existing letters and bills that orders were sent by bereaved ones to friends residing at a distance to purchase and wear mourning rings in memory of the dead, and send the bills to the heirs or the principals of the mourning family.

What Happened to the Dead from the Alamo?



"The Story of the Fall of the Alamo," as told in The San Antonio Light, on March 6, 1886 and later appeared in the San Antonio Light newspaper on Sunday March 6, 1907. This article is an edited version of the article.

Few men are now alive who then took part in that almost hopeless struggle against the perfidious and bloody tyrant of Mexico, General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, and they are old and decrepit. None of the defenders of the Alamo escaped. The most concise account is that of Francisco Antonio Ruiz published in the Texas Almanac for 1860. Ruiz was the alcalde of this city. Following is the account given:

"On the 23rd of February 1836, at 2 p.m., General Santa Anna entered the city of San Antonio with a part of his army. This he effected without any resistances, the forces under the command of Travis, Bowie and Crockett having on the same day, at 8 a.m. learned that the Mexican army was on the banks of the Medina River, and concentrated in the Alamo.

In the evening they commenced to exchange fire with guns and from the 23rd of February to the 6th of March (in which the storming was made by Santa Anna), the roar of artillery and volleys of musketry were constantly heard. On the 6th of March, at 3 p.m., General Santa Anna at the head of his men, advanced against the Alamo. The infantry, artillery and cavalry had formed about 1000 varas from the walls of said fortress. The Mexican army charged and were twice repulsed by the deadly fire of Travis' artillery, which resembled a constant thunder. At the third charge the Toluca

battalion commenced to scale the walls and suffered severely. Out of 800 men, only 130 were left alive.

When the Mexican army had succeeded in entering the walls, I with Political Chief (Jefe Politico), Don Ramon Musquiz, and other members of the corporation, accompanied the curate Don Refugio de la Garza, who, by Santa Anna's orders had assembled during the night, at a temporary fortification erected in Potrero street, with the object of attending the wounded. As soon as the storming commenced, we crossed the bridge on Commerce Street with this object in view, and about 100 yards from the same a party of Mexican dragoons fired upon us and compelled us to fall back on the river to the place occupied before. Half an hour had elapsed when Santa Anna sent one of his aides with an order for us to come before him. He directed me to call upon some of the neighbors to come with carts to carry the dead to the cemetery, and also to accompany him, as he was desirous to have Colonel Travis, Bowie and Crockett shown to him.

On the north battery of the fortress lay the lifeless body of Colonel Travis on the gun carriage shot only in the forehead. Toward the west in a small fort opposite the city we found the body of Colonel Crockett, Colonel Bowie was found dead in his bed in one of the rooms of the south side.

Santa Anna, after the Mexicans were taken out, ordered wood to be brought to burn the bodies of the Texans. He sent a company of dragoons with me to bring wood and dry branches from the neighboring forests. About 3 o'clock in the afternoon of the next day they commenced laying wood and dry branches upon which a file of dead bodies were placed, more wood was piled on them and another file brought, and in this manner all were arranged in layers. Kindling wood was distributed through the pile and at 8 o'clock it was lighted.

The dead Mexicans of Santa Anna's army were taken to the graveyard, but not having sufficient room for them, I ordered some of them to be thrown in the river, which was done on the same day. Santa Anna's loss estimated at 1600 men. These were the flower of his army.

(Signed) "FRANCISCO ANTONIO RUIZ."

Reference

The Story of the Fall of the Alamo, (1886, March 6). Retrieved from http://www.tamu.edu/faculty/ccbn/dewitt/adp/archives/newsarch/ruizart.htm

Victorian Monsters
Victorian Mourning & Funerary Practices

by Samantha Vance

With every Victorian topic I take up, I am continually amazed at how similar we are to the Victorians. In addition to tackling several of the same weighty social and political issues, many of our social customs and traditions were handed directly to us from the Victorians.

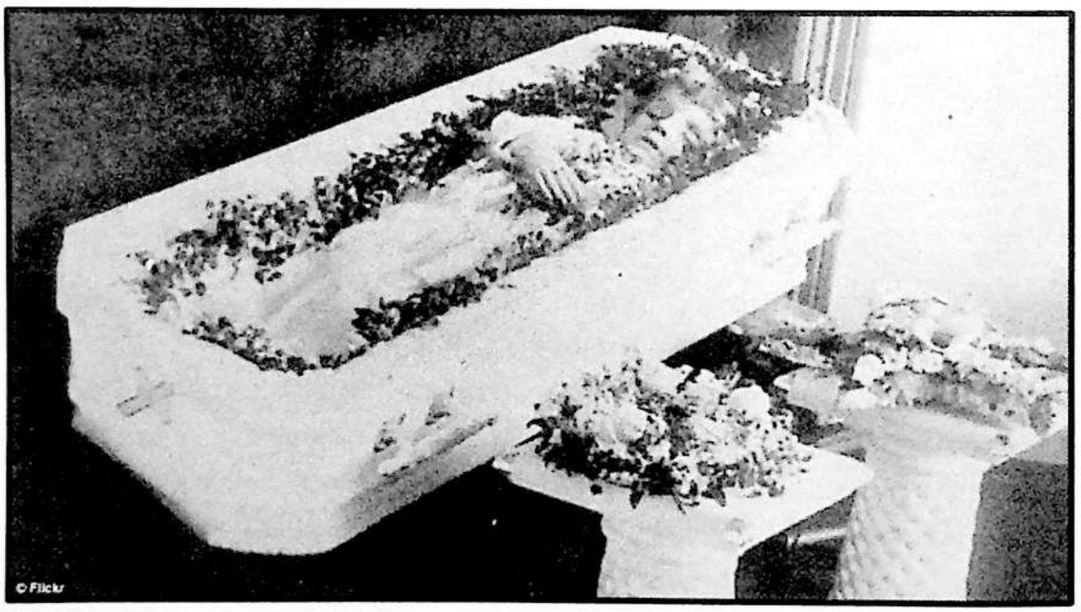
For example, at the beginning of the 19th century, Christmas was hardly celebrated at all; however, by the end of the century, it became the biggest annual celebration in England and was accompanied by many of the same traditions that we have retained today, including the Christmas tree. However, our Christmas customs aren't the only things that we have inherited from the Victorians. Our weddings, christenings, and funerals are all marked by the Victorian love of ritual and tradition. For the Victorians, these were events of incredible import, and since the mortality rate, particularly for children, was so high, funeral traditions gained particular importance as the century progressed.

As the 19th century began, Britain began to see the emergence of a financially stable middle class, and with it, came improved life expectancies. Early deaths were viewed increasingly as tragic and deserving of elaborate and grand-scale mourning. Funeral

and mourning practices were further ritualized when Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Consort Alfred, died. She went into deep mourning for the remainder of her life and set a precedent which many of her British subjects followed. Death practices (and related superstitions) became more elaborate as the century progressed; however, toward the end of the 1800s, the ostentatious show had begun to diminish, and by the 1890s, funerary practices were relegated to a prescribed set of social rules, and countless articles and books were written chronicling the "etiquette of funerals."

Why All the Fuss?

For the wealthy, the burial of a loved one was as much about "being seen" and doing things "properly" as it was about the process of grief and mourning. However, things were a little different in the lower classes. Because the death rate (particularly for children) was so high, many lower-class families would plan ahead and save money to ensure that the deaths of their children would be handled in an appropriate manner. Funerals were so costly, yet so important, that lower class families often went without the necessities of life because the family refused to spend their funerary funds on things like food, clothing, and shelter.



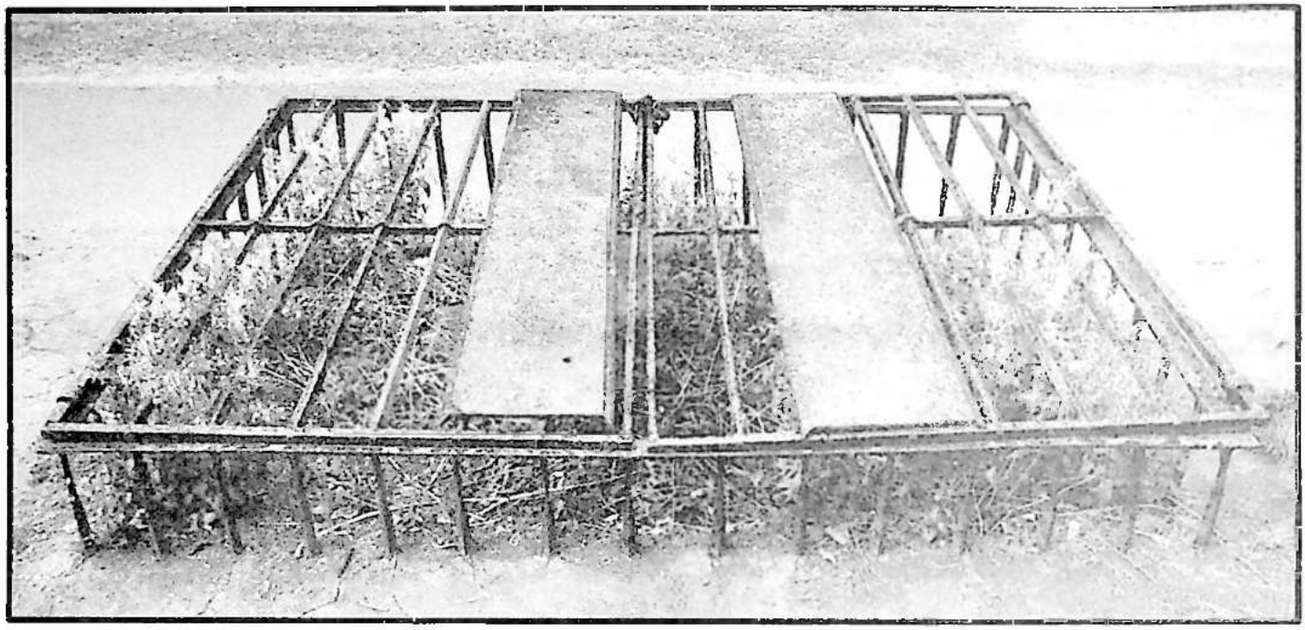
The necessity of burial money was perpetuated by several fears, fears relegated primarily to the poor. Families who were unable to provide for a proper funeral and burial of their loved ones were forced to rely on the local Poor Union who would provide the bare minimum in burial – a pauper's funeral. The **Poor Union** buried those unable

to afford their own services in a common pauper's grave, without a headstone and with very little ceremony. **Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* gives one of the best literary descriptions of a pauper's funeral when Mr. Sowerberry, the undertaker, arranges the burial of a poor woman in the parish, which includes the bare coffin, the workhouse pall bearers, and the mourning garb (a ratty looking cloak) lent to the husband and mother. He also describes a delay during which *'local boys played a noisy game of hide and seek among the tombstones, or varied their amusements by jumping backwards and forwards over the coffin'*** (Jupp and Gettings 224).

An even worse fear was that of grave robbing, which was at an epidemic level in the early 1800s. The great fear here lies in the Christian belief that there would be a physical resurrection of the whole body, and the worry was that dissection could have been detrimental to the process (Jupp and Gettings 224). Robert Louis Stevenson's short story entitled "The Body-Snatcher" chronicles the theft of a body by two "Resurrectionists." Their victim is described as:

> ***"The wife of a farmer, a woman who had lived for sixty years, and been known for nothing but good butter and a godly conversation, was to be rooted from her grave at midnight and carried, dead and naked, to that far-away city that she had always honoured with her Sunday best; the place beside her family was to be empty till the crack of doom; her innocent and almost venerable members to be exposed to that last curiosity of the anatomist."***

With descriptions like this, it is clear why people feared for their loved ones. Families went to great lengths to ensure that the eternal rest of their loved ones remained undisturbed. Iron fences were erected around burial plots, people were buried in double and even triple coffins. A wide range of different gadgets were also invented and used to prevent the prying off of the coffin lid (Jupp and Gettings 224). All of the safe-guards were expensive and out of the reach of many of the lower classes; however, they could minimize the chances of body-snatching with a proper burial.



Another very real concern was due to the **Anatomy Act (1832),** enacted to combat the body-snatching. This law legalized the dissection of people who died in prisons, asylums, or workhouses. Unless a relative came forward within seven days of an inmate's death, prepared to pay for a coffin and a churchyard burial, the inmate's body could legitimately be sent to a teaching institution for dissection. This "donation" would be made in return for a fee to be utilized in the institution from which the body came (or pocketed by a corrupt institution official). Because of the incredibly high demand for cadavers, there was a great deal of corruption existing in the system. This law (and the shady practices which accompanied it) made it much more likely that lower class individuals without the money for a proper burial would end up on a dissection table, lending greater fears about the final fate of a deceased family member (Brine).

The dissecting room at Cambridge in 1888.
Source: Wellcome Images (http://wellcomeimages.org)

Burial Clubs

In light of these fears, **"burial clubs"** cropped up. These clubs helped many families afford proper funeral services for their loved ones. These clubs were founded on the fear that poor working-class families might not be able to pay for proper funeral services and burials. The clubs operated on a premise similar to today's insurance policies.

Members of the club made weekly payments which ensured that the club would cover the burial expenses, regardless of how long the individual had been a member. Rates were based on things like age of those covered and the type of funeral requested. The clubs would collect their fees weekly, either at the members' homes or at a local public venue, such as the local public house ("Burial Clubs"). *Mary Barton*'s John Barton, references one such club when his beloved wife dies. He is concerned about his and his daughter's financial future, but "he was in a club, so that money was provided for the burial."

Unfortunately, just like most things, these clubs were abused and mismanaged, leading to their collapse and dissolution. There were suggestions that parents would enroll their sickly children in several clubs, each of which would pay the assigned benefits without knowledge of the others. There were even reports of parents neglecting or downright murdering their children for the club benefits; however, many of these reports suggest more sensationalist reporting and overstated middle-class concerns than actual evidence ("Burial Clubs").

Customs in the Home of the Deceased

Even though the life expectancy was improving for the middle and upper classes, death was still around every corner for the lower classes. These individuals took whatever precautions (effective or not) to protect themselves by ensuring that the deceased's spirit found its way to the afterlife and didn't stick around to take anybody else with him.

- The family would draw the curtains and stop the clocks at the time of death to mark the exact moment the deceased had expired.
- They would use crepe or veiling to cover the mirrors throughout the house to avoid trapping the spirit of the deceased in the looking glasses.

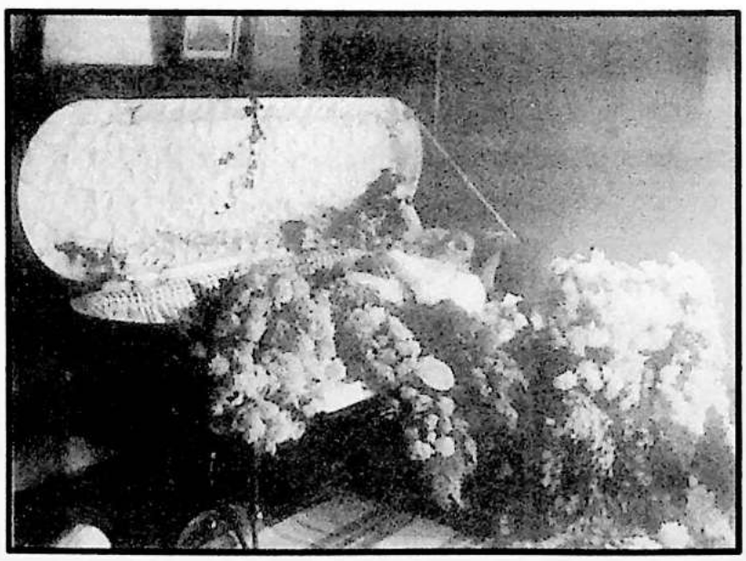
- Family photos were also turned face down throughout the house to prevent the deceased person's spirits from possessing relatives and friends.
- If several members of the same family died, everyone and everything that entered the house would wear a black ribbon to prevent the deaths spreading even further. This practice would even apply to dogs and chickens.
- The family would hang a wreath of laurel and yew or boxwood, tied with black crepe or ribbons, on the front door as a signal to neighbors and visitors that a death had occurred (*Friends of Oak Grove Cemetery*).
- The bell knob or door handle would also be draped with black crepe, and tied with a ribbon – black if the deceased were married or aged and white if he or she were young or unmarried (Behnam).
- When the body was removed from the house, it was taken head-first, so that it would be unable to call others to follow it (Breyer).

Taking Care of Details

The duty of preparing the body for burial was taken care of by a friend of the family. The body would be washed and then, dressed as he or she would have been in life. Finally, flowers would be strewn around the face and throughout the coffin. Friends of the family took over many important duties including the greeting of callers, arranging details like meals, and seating guests at the funeral itself. Early in the century, wakes were popular, but as the century progressed, they lost their popularity, largely due to the drinking and mirth that often accompanied them ("The House of Mourning").

The Funeral

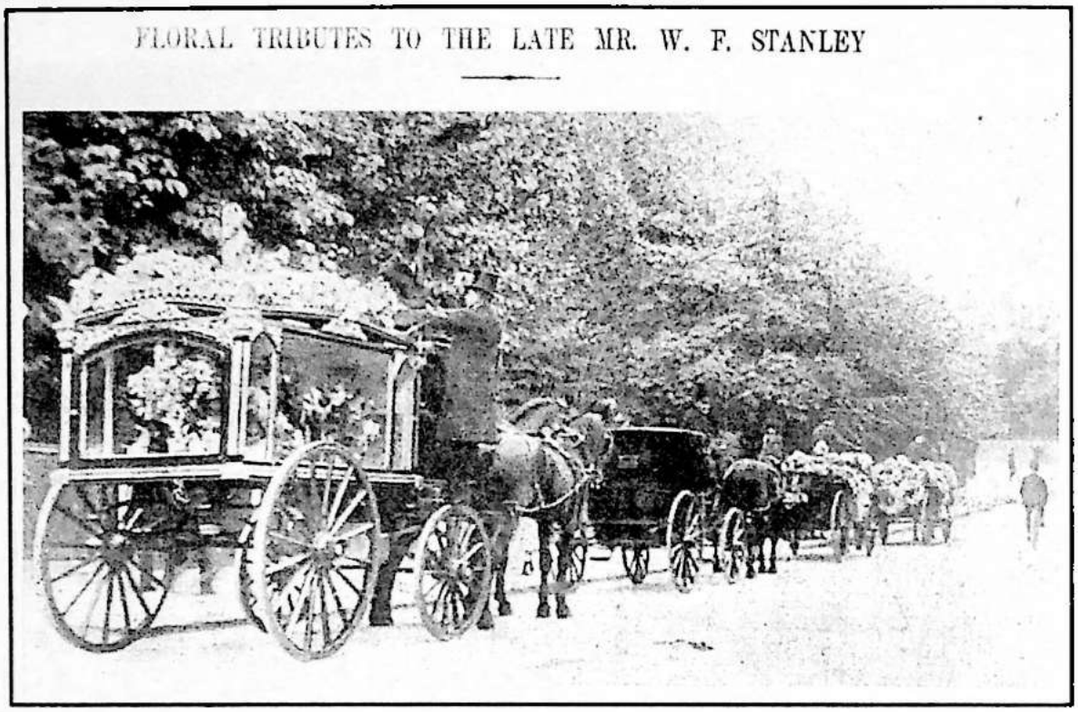
Funeral invitations were often sent out to those whose presence was desired. These invitations were engraved on a small square of paper with a wide black border and delivered by private messenger. It was also clear that an invitation to a funeral was not to be slighted.



The funeral service itself was likely held at the house of the bereaved. The family was expected to view the remains before guests

arrived, which made it imperative that guests arrive at their appointed time and not earlier. The family would be seated in the order of relation to the deceased, closest relative at the head of the line, and whenever possible, they were seated in a separate room thus protecting any show of grief from the eyes of their guests.

If the service was to take place at the deceased's home, the coffin would remain open so that guests could view the body before the start of the funeral; however, it was not opened in a church unless the deceased were so prominent and beloved that the house wouldn't be sufficient to provide an opportunity for viewing by the guests. After the service concluded, the guests would remain in the house or church until the family and those attending the interment were escorted from the building in preparation for the procession ("The House of Mourning").



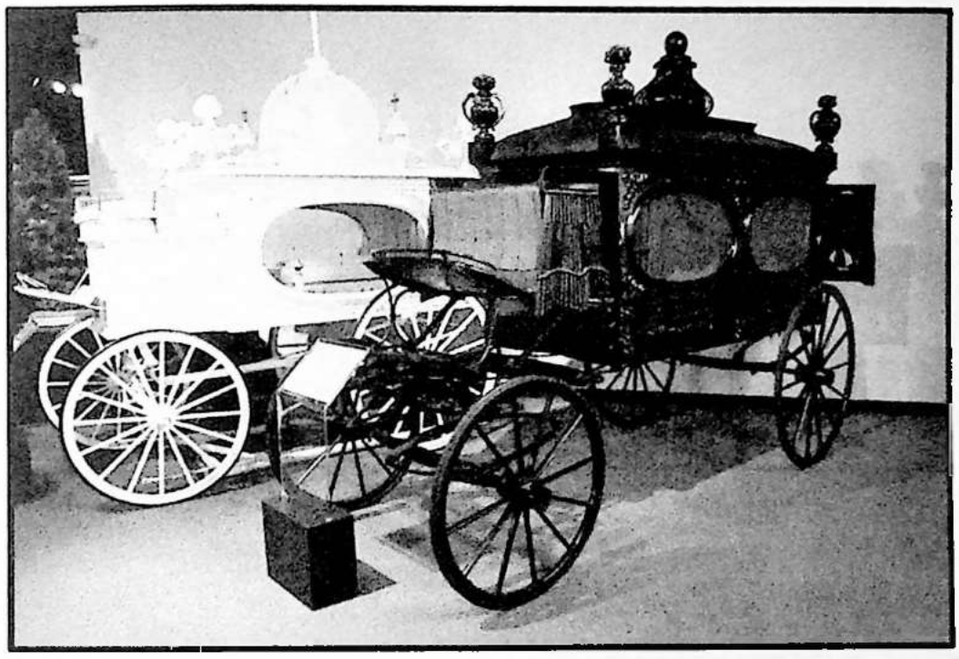
The Procession

The funeral procession would vary based on the cost factor associated with the funeral. The first carriage in the procession would contain the clergyman and the pall bearers, six (maybe eight) intimate friends of the deceased who carry the coffin. The next carriage would be the hearse, followed by the carriage of the nearest relatives, which would be followed by more distant relatives and friends (Alirangues).

There were special elements that might be introduced into this basic lineup. If the deceased were a mounted military officer, his horse, fully caparisoned and draped in mourning, would immediately trail the hearse. If any societies of masonic bodies were involved, they would precede the hearse in the procession. (Incidentally, the Masons would have expected to make the arrangements and conduct the funeral according to their own formulas) ("The House of Mourning").

The basic Victorian hearse was an elaborate carriage, black or white (in the case of children), with glass sides, and silver and gold decorations. This basic layout could be dressed-up according to the prominence of its occupant or the purse strings of his family. Embellishments included multiple black horses drawing the carriage, velvet

coverings for the coffin and the horses, ostrich plumes decorating every corner, horse, and attendant, or even an entire canopy of ostrich feathers covering the hearse. Flowers surrounded the coffin and would be visible through the glass windows. There were also smaller white hearses designed just for children. They were pulled by ponies and accompanied by mourners on foot instead of in carriages (Alirangues).



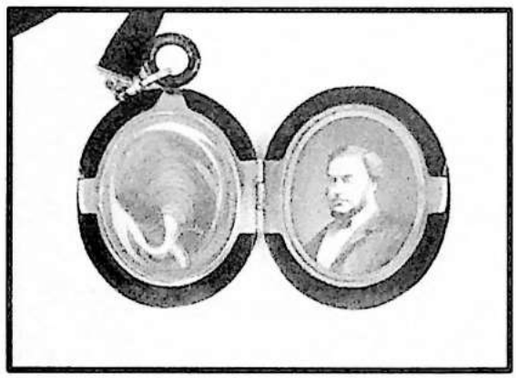
Mourning Attire

The research on an appropriate mourning wardrobe got really complicated very fast, so I decided to look at one of the later articles I found advising those left behind on how to show "some outward degree" of respect for the dead. The article from *Collier's Cyclopedia* printed in 1901 suggests some moderation in the mourning customs of the time period.

It addresses the *"new"* habit of ignoring traditional mourning under the plea that *"mourning of the heart, not mere outward woe"* should be the practice. It suggests that in the case of "husband, wives, parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and the nearer-related cousins" that some outward show of grief (more than a mere arm band of crape) must be adopted out of decency and respect to the memory of the deceased. Apparently, people had already begun to move

away from some of the strict codes of mourning established by Queen Victoria's long mourning of Albert.

Mourning Jewelry and Mementos



The same article offers rules of mourning for women's "ornaments" as well. It requires that no ornaments be worn in deep mourning with the exception of jet (Collier's Cyclopedia). Jet is also known as ignite and is a type of fossilized wood which became coal. It was utilized widely during the Victorian era as jewelry of mourning. Whitby jet was the most desirable and has since become quite rare.

In addition to jet, another material became quite common in jewelry making of the time, the loved one's hair. This seems macabre and slightly creepy to us, but it was perfectly acceptable in the second stage of mourning. The hair would often be woven into jewelry itself or encased in another form of ornament, like a locket or pendant (Twombly).

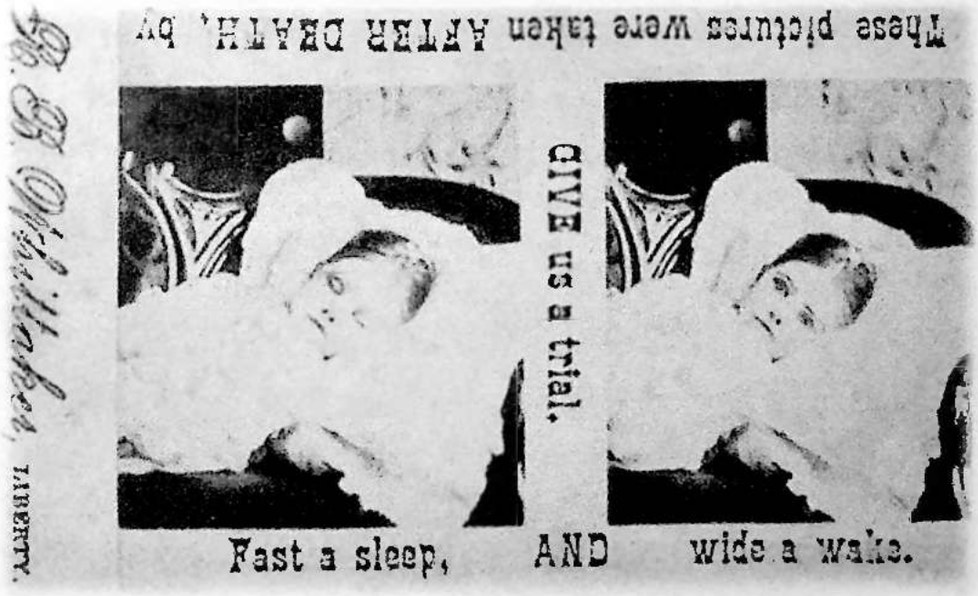
Postmortem Photography

Postmortem photography may be the single creepiest element of Victorian death and mourning. This was just one element of the *memento mori* (which translates to "remember your mortality") sought by the Victorians.

The advent of the less expensive daguerreotype photograph meant that poor families who couldn't afford to have portraits painted of their loved ones, could now obtain images of their family members, even if they waited until after they were dead. This was particularly true of infants and children. The child mortality rate was quite high, and children often died before there was time to obtain a photograph (Breyer).

There were several ways of posing the dead in these postmortem photographs. The most obvious "pose" is that of the deceased lying in state in the coffin itself or in the bed where the body was placed on display surrounded by flowers. Although this seems the most appropriate pose to us, it was the least used by the families of the deceased. A common pose used for infants was in guise of sleep. Babies would be dressed and laid out as if they were napping for the photograph; however, while common, this one still wasn't used as often as we would think.

The following photograph is an advertisement for postmortem photography services:



While photographing a dead body (in any pose) makes modern Western sensibilities a little uncomfortable, the third and most common form of posing was to place the deceased in a position mimicking life. This downright jangles modern nerves. This pose might include propping the deceased up on a stand in the midst of a family portrait setting or placing him or her in an environment and attitude that the deceased would likely have used in his or her lifetime. For example, a carpenter might be propped up on a stand in his woodshop with tools in his hands. For children, this type of posing

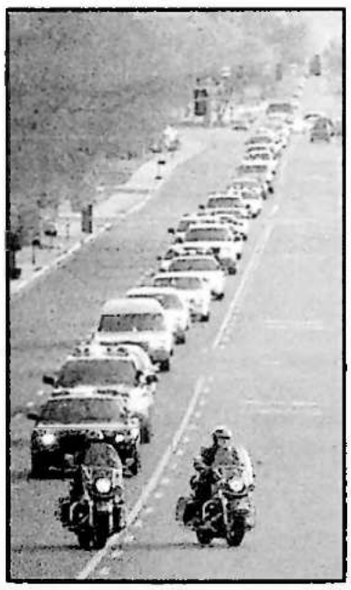
would include flowers, favorite toys, and even family pets. Families and photographers would often go so far as to prop the eyelids open or paint eyes on the outside of the deceased individual's closed eyelids. They might also add makeup to create the illusion of a rosy cheek. Some of these "special effects" would be added to the print after the photograph was taken and developed (Nelson).

Victorian Mourning Traditions Continued

When we look at the rigid, rigorous, and macabre mourning and funerary traditions of the Victorians, we like to consider ourselves enlightened and superior to these foolish and superstitious people. The truth, however, is that many of the traditions we carry on in our own funerary practices are directly handed to us from the Victorians, especially in the South.

Funerals are accompanied with an elaborate preparation of the body for "viewing." If examined logically, no one should really want to see a dead body, especially the body of someone we barely knew. Yet, we file into funeral homes and march past the deceased and make comments like, "Doesn't she look good?" Logic says, "No, she doesn't look good. She looks dead." However, we convince ourselves that this is the way things are done. Like the Victorians, our funerals unwaveringly involve the wearing of black, the singing of hymns, and the consumption of vast quantities of food; anything else is simply inappropriate.

Our funeral processions are straight out of the Victorian playbook, except carriages have been replaced by cars. We practice the same order of "carriages" and use the same concepts of pallbearers and the separation of the family from the rest of the guests.



As for the hair and memento jewelry, this might creep us out, but we aren't too very far from this today. There are companies that offer the chance to turn our loved one into diamonds after his or her death. Granted, wearing a diamond is more appealing than wearing someone's hair, but the premise is still the same.

The more I learn about the Victorians, the more I'm convinced that we are they. We have taken the best (and the worst) that they had to offer and have made it our own. The pomp and rituals of death, funerals, and mourning will continue in the Victorian traditions, whether we give them credit for our habits or not.

Our sincere thanks to Samantha Vance for allowing us to reprint her article.

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Dr. Thomas Holmes:
The *True* Life and Career of the Pioneer Embalmer

by
Edward C. Johnson, Gail R. Johnson, Melissa Johnson

In 1892, Holmes wrote of his visit to his former headquarters and like most of his letters is rambling, relating a variety of subjects.

"To the Editor of the Casket:

Have returned from Washington where I was warmly received by a very large number of old friends and acquaintances. To my great surprise I found my large room, which I left 22 years ago unoccupied, the signs, which I had painted in large letters running the full length of the building, being as legible as ever, Embalming of the Dead, by Dr. Holmes.

There were also painted below the main signs hideous black linear figures (coffins). It was here I embalmed a large number of the 4028. There is an interested history attached to this place. Persons doing business near-by told me there have been over 10,000 people there to look at the lettering in front of the house."

Holmes continues,

"When the Army withdrew from the James River I returned on the Schooner Maxon Rodgers, loaded on deck and below with Fisk Metallic burial cases, all of which were moved into this building and mostly sold to city undertakers in less than 4 months. There were no embalmers beside myself." Thomas Holmes, M.D., October 1, 1892, Brooklyn.

The newspaper article then continues,

"The thing has been carried so far that on Louisiana Avenue, near Ninth Street, two rivals in the business have opposition establishments side-by-side, on which are the most grotesque displays of coffins and insignia of the business, one of these institutions publishing that bodies are embalmed 'free.' The above may be called the fair side of the picture, but our citizens who reside near these establishments complain bitterly of the stench that has arisen from them during the last two or three weeks."

"It is said that human bodies that have lain on the battlefield for several days have been brought into the heart of the city and allowed to remain for forty-

eight hours while undergoing the 'Embalming process.' This should not be so."

"While we wish that every facility should be afforded to the relatives of lost ones to recover the remains of those that have gone from them, we must say that the process of preserving or delivering the bodies of soldiers or others should be done at some point remote from the city, where the healthy of the living would not be endangered." (One of the establishments mentioned was Holmes', which resulted in definite action two weeks later.)

Dr. Holmes was arrested on Saturday, by Officer McColgan, on the charge of creating a nuisance by embalming bodies in his establishment, in the heart of the city. He gave a $300.00 bail security for his appearance today.

Dr. Dove, the Secretary of the Board of Health, who stated that he had made a careful examination of the premises in question, and had found nothing to designate it as a place for embalming the dead. There was not a vestige of a dead body or anything leading one to suppose embalming was practiced there. It was, however, a large undertaking establishment, and it was known that bodies which had been disinterred were re-coffined there, and that in the prosecution of their business the proprietors had frequently exposed the details of their business. Dr. Dove had applied to the Superintendent of Police, and any abuses would be corrected. The further consideration of the subject was postponed until the next meeting.

Dr. Thomas Holmes had a number of patents issued in the field of embalming such as:

- Patent # 33, 885, Dec. 10, 1861 (Williamsburg, New York), a pump for injecting fluid arterially.
- Patent #39,291, July 21, 1863 (Washington, D.C.), a removal pouch of rubberized canvas for carrying and storing bodies of battlefield dead.
- Patent #42, 659, May 10, 1864 (Washington, D.C.), a disinfecting coffin.
- Patent #177,014, March 6, 1877 (Brooklyn, New York), a container and chemical system for preserving dead bodies.
- Patient #450,017, April 7, 1891, (Brooklyn, New York), a gaseous preservative chemical compound for arterial injection into dead body.

His removal pouch was the subject of a story in the *Sunnyside*. On the front page of the *Sunnyside* is an illustration of the Thomas Holmes Civil War removal pouch. The article concerning this item read:

"It was during the Civil War, when the air was filled with the groans of the dying on many an ensanguined battlefield, that Dr. Holmes, finding it

impossible to obtain receptacles for the numberless brave fellows who died, with their faces to the foe, devised, and on July 4, 1863, patented his elastic deodorizing receptacle, which was first used at Gettysburg. The value of these portable coffins was quickly recognized and thousands were disposed of. Not only were they purchased for the dead, but the living also secured them."

"The coffins weighing about 8 pounds 6 ounces, were generally rolled up knapsack shape by the soldiers and were often used as a sleeping berth during the forced marches in stormy weather. So accustomed to facing death were the boys in blue that they looked without fear upon the possibility of using their coffins – a contingency so thoughtfully provided against. The portable coffin had many advantages over wood or metallic receptacles. It was often used as a stretcher in carrying the badly wounded hurriedly off the field of battle. In cases of death, the decedents would be quickly but skillfully embalmed by Dr. Holmes and his aids, when the coffin would be inflated, marked, and shipped North."

"In cases of hurried retreat across streams, the 'Eureka' was found in a perfect life-preserver, as eight persons clinging to the handles of the inflated coffin could reach the opposite shore in safety. In presenting these illustrations of what in time of the war would be a great demand."

In an article on the history of embalming, N. T. Shaw (1830-1910) of Newark, Ohio, traces out his own experience involving the transition from ice-cooling to embalming:

"In the first place I will state, I am now sixty-two years old and have been engaged in the undertaking business all my life, until the departure from the ice to the fluids and from the huge ice-casket to the nicely draped cooling board."

"My first experience in embalming was when in the army. There I found but few who made a success of it. Two of these who were successful were Dr. Holmes, of Brooklyn, and W. P. Cornelius, who is now a prominent undertaker of Nashville, Tennessee."

Cornelius wrote,

"It was during the year 1862 that one Dr. E. C. Lewis, came to me from the employ of Dr. Holmes and proposed to embalm bodies. It was new to me, but I at once put him to work with the Holmes fluid and Holmes injector. He was quite an expert, but like a great many men, he could not stand

prosperity, and soon wanted to get into some other kind of business, which he did. He drifted from one thing to another and finally drifted out of the city and I have heard no more of him."

In an issue of the *Casket* appears a reprint from the *Suburban Citizen* newspaper in a series entitled Prominent Businessmen of Georgetown, D.C., J. F. Birch – the undertaking and embalming business under the above name at 3034 "M" Street was established in 1835.

"George A. Birch, one of the brothers, took instructions by practical work in embalming of Dr. Holmes, who came here from New York and embalmed 4208 [sic] soldiers. This was the first embalming in the District and the experience gained by Mr. Birch at that time put him to the front in the business when Dr. Holmes went away."

One of the most repeated of the false legends states that Dr. Holmes was commissioned in the U. S. Army to practice embalming. This is completely spurious. The writers have never found any statement by Dr. Holmes claiming to have been in the military service under any circumstance. All of the well-known Civil War embalmers were civilians, as was Dr. Holmes. Some had been, or became, medical officers in the army like Drs. Prunk & Lyford but always retained a civilian status as embalmers.

The only clue to the possible origin of this legend is a news item in the May, 1861, *Brooklyn News. "A New Feature – Dr. Holmes of this city, the celebrated embalmist, has received a commission as surgeon in the U. S. Army. His duty will be to embalm all those killed in battle whose bodies it may be desirable to preserve."* Neither National Archives, Dept. of Defense, or the New York State Adjutant Generals Office, have any record of Dr. Holmes serving in any capacity in the military service.

Another account states,

"From our special correspondent camp at Harrison's Landing, James River, Saturday morning, July 26, 1862.

"Yesterday I paid a visit to the establishment of Dr. Holmes of Brooklyn, who has authority from the government to be located with and follow up the Army. His establishment here is situated in a very desirable location. He occupies the Granary of the Harrison House, which is but a short distance from the River's bank. Many of your readers no doubt are not aware that there are embalmers always with the army. It is for their information that I visited the establishment in question."

"The process is one of the very best ever invented and can be applied in many cases, two or three weeks after death. I saw a man embalmed who was only brought in the evening before by his Captain: he was exposed in a metallic case. More than 6,000 soldiers and officers have visited the establishment yesterday. The prices for embalming are $20.00 for private and from that sum up to $100.00 for officers according to rank. Of course there are express charges for taking the body home which in some cases comes to more than the cost of embalming."

Dr. Holmes, like most other Civil War embalming surgeons, advertised in the various newspapers. The following ads were published in the Washington, D. C., *Evening Star* during 1862.

"Embalming the Dead, Dr. Holmes' American process. This process, without the use of poisons, discovered 13 years ago, and practiced since that time in the warmest sections of the United States, is sufficient recommendation of itself. This mode of embalming dead bodies is no foreign invention, but purely American, having discovered it myself after years of chemical research. Many of the residents of this city will remember 7 years since the exposition of the body of the child embalmed by me. My process has been tested by a large number of physicians and chemists in the principal cities of the Union, and persons of the highest responsibility, who have given their certificates as my pamphlet will show."

"The body of a dog embalmed 11 months since, and exposed to the heat of the past summer is on public exhibition at 303 Pennsylvania Ave., where I have embalmed a large number of officers and private soldiers of our army to the entire satisfaction of their surviving relatives and friends."

"I will also embalm bodies by SUCQUET'S French system at $10.00 a piece. This process I could have used since the discovery of my own, had it been as good or better. The French Academy of Sciences at the annual sitting held on the 22 of March 1852, published Sucquet's system to the world, a copy of which I have."

"Persons wishing bodies embalmed by either process will apply to A. Buckly undertaker, 303 Penn. Ave., Jos Burch, undertaker, Georgetown, D. C., Henry Lee, undertaker, 433 Penn. Ave., No Poisons Used!!"

Another ad reads,

> *"Dr. Holmes, the embalmer who first established embalming in the United States, and first in this city, has returned from the seat of war and taken rooms on Louisiana Ave., near the guard house, where he will resume his former business."*

Another area of criticism of Dr. Homes is the stipulation that he embalmed 4,028 bodies during the Civil War. Critics feel the number is unrealistic and an implausible achievement. Consideration of several facts should convince skeptics of the truth of this statement. First, the total of 4,028 breaks to a trifle over 1,000 cases in each of the 4 years of war. The 1,000 cases in turn average out to about 85 per month or about 3 per day, not an excessive or unrealistic number. Secondly, the reader must realize that the number 4,028 included cases which received treatment other than arterial embalming.

Most of the bodies were arterially injected when possible. Such cases, as today, depend upon ready availability of the embalmer to the body reasonably soon after death. Unfortunately, this did not always occur. Many cases among the 4,028 were those where the deceased died on the battlefield and was subsequently buried unembalmed and then at some future date, perhaps 6 months to a year later, was disinterred and "prepared "for shipment home. These bodies were "disinfected" not embalmed.

The "disinfecting" implied no arterial injection but rather the simple placing of the body in a metal lined box filled with sawdust, or charcoal all saturated with the embalming chemical. In some instances, such bodies were eviscerated, the trunk cavity repacked with sawdust and/or charcoal before coffining. Any practicing embalmer today will surely agree that handling of 3 cases per day was a readily attainable goal.

Shortly after the war Dr. Holmes returned to his Brooklyn home and began a campaign to sell his embalming chemical, which he named Innominata. As late as 1885 ads in undertakers' journals offered his proposition,

> *"Dr. Holmes' original process of embalming is offered for sale. The process is the result of 35 years of experience and has been tested to the fullest extent throughout the United States. Dr. Holmes has constantly offered to embalm in competition with this process against any embalmer in the world for $1,000.00. Which challenge has never been taken up. Offer will be received for the right (franchise) of the USA or any state or section."*

Holmes sold franchises to exclusive areas of distribution as well as the chemical product directly to users. Naturally he received and used many endorsements of his product. One typical letter in 1889 states,

> *"During the very warm weather of August, I gave Dr. Holmes' non-poisonous embalming fluid a fair and impartial trial, and found it to give perfect satisfaction, doing all he claims it will do.* Joseph L. Marfing, Embalmer, 1842 ½ Fulton St., Brooklyn, NY"

Dr. Holmes not only manufactured embalming fluid but a number of pharmaceutical products and an excellent root beer, which has been the source of much merriment. Jokesters leeringly alluded to production of the root beer and embalming fluid from the same containers. Actually, he did very little "trade embalming" except to demonstrate his embalming fluid in the N. Y. City metropolitan area.

Holmes, despite his excellent income during the Civil War, made a series of poor investments. One such example was his purchase of 140 acres of land at Esopus, N.Y., north of Poughkeepsie, on the west bank of the Hudson River. The site, with its view of the Hudson and mixture of cleared and timbered land, was intended to be the site of a health farm. Health farms were then an increasingly fashionable investment amongst medical men during the last years of the 19th century and fortunes were made and lost in their development and operation. Unfortunately, Dr. Holmes did not profit from his venture.

Previously we have listed Dr. Holmes' patents and wish to point out that each of his post-war patents indicated a new approach to the problem of preservation of the dead. While inventions were not all successful, they do give proof of his obsessions with and continuing interest in the subject of embalming.

In a letter to an undertaker inquiring about the antiseptic gas and coffin process, Holmes wrote, "*With my patented gas I can stop decomposition, and kill all the maggots in any public receiving tomb where may lay as many as two thousand bodies. This is especially a fine thing for morgues, hospitals and dead-houses!*"

In his later years Dr. Holmes had a number of physical and mental problems. In 1896 he was repairing a grape arbor when the ladder upon which he was standing, 12 feet above the ground, collapsed. While he suffered no broken bones, it is believed his mental condition suffered as a result.

In May of the same year, 1896,

"Holmes was taken into custody by four policemen from the Clymer Street station on the complaint of his wife and his sister, Mrs. Theodore Dowd, after threatening their lives and then demolishing part of his furniture with an ax. It was with great difficulty that he was overpowered by the officers. Through bad management in business affairs Dr. Holmes recently found himself in financial straits, and in January last (1896) his property at Broadway and Marcy Avenues was sold under foreclosure proceedings. Theodore Dowd, Dr. Holmes' brother-in-law, bought the property. Dr. Dowd, according to Dr. Holmes' wife, was to retain possession of it until it increased in value, and then it was to be sold and an equal division made, after the expenses had been deducted. Since the foreclosure sale, Dr. Holmes has not been well. He imagined that he was a ruined man, and that his property was being taken away from him by his relatives. For over a week he showed signs of dementia."

The balance of Dr. Holmes' life occasioned little public notice. His death of cerebral apoplexy on January 8, 1900 at 7 p.m. in his home did provoke newspaper headlines. The New York *Times* obituary was headlines:

"Dead Embalmer wants NO Embalming! Dr. Thomas Holmes, who was sometimes called the Father of Embalming, died at his S. 9th Street and Marcy Avenue home on Monday night after an illness of more than 2 years. He was eight- three years old. Dr. Holmes was a graduate of the University of the City of New York and studied medicine under Dr. Valentine Mott."

"After his graduation he was appointed examining physician to the Coroner, and in his six years of such service took an active interest in embalming fluids. In the doctor's house are a number of specimens of his work in embalming, one of which is the head and shoulder of a girl who died at the age of fourteen. The girl died 40 years ago but the remains are in good state of preservation. Another specimen is the body of a man, six feet tall, which was willed to the doctor. During the Civil War Dr. Holmes was said to have embalmed about four thousand bodies. Funeral services will be held in Calvary Protestant Episcopal Church tonight. The burial on Thursday morning at Cypress Hills Cemetery."

"Dr. Holmes' mind was affected 2 years ago and he was taken to the Flatbush Hospital for an inquiry as to his mental condition. It was his last wish that his body should not be embalmed!" Dr. and Mrs. Holmes were childless."

Even in death Dr. Holmes continued to elicit newspaper interest. In October of 1900 the *Brooklyn Eagle* headlined an article, *"Unearthed a skeleton, police believe Dr. Holmes had been experimenting on a corpse."*

> *"A startling find was made today in a cellar under the drugstore formerly occupied by the late Dr. Thomas Holmes of Marcy Avenue and Broadway. Workingmen cleaning out the cellar this morning discovered the skeleton of a young girl, missing the lower limbs. It was covered and hidden behind several packing cases. Captain Hayes of the Clymer Street police station was notified and soon after appeared on the scene. He made a careful investigation of the cellar, following this with inquiries in the neighborhood to ascertain if there was an excuse or a suspicion of crime in connection with the matter."*
>
> *"The information obtained by him led to the fact that while in all probability there was no reason to believe that murder had been committed, there was good reason to believe the Dr. Holmes, just before he died, had almost solved a most important theory that he was working upon and that if he had lived would probably have perpetuated his name with a patent for fluid petrifying human bodies."*
>
> *"It seems about 18 months ago the doctor used the cellar as a laboratory where he made constant experiments upon a secret formula which he claimed would in the end enable him to preserve bodies for an indefinite time and more completely than had ever been done before. The fact that the skeleton found was half petrified satisfied Captain Hayes that it had been used to experiment upon by the Doctor and that no crime had been committed. The skeleton was removed to the Clymer Street police station."*

In 1902 during the final burial of President Lincoln at Springfield, Illinois, reporters from the New York *Sun* interviewed Dr. Holmes' widow. As mentioned earlier in this article, Mrs. Holmes is one source of the false legend concerning the embalming of President Lincoln.

The article unfortunately is headlined: "He embalmed Lincoln's body."

> *"Secret of the process went to the grave with Dr.* Holmes *–It was the late Dr. Thomas Holmes of Brooklyn who embalmed the body of President Lincoln, which was found to be in most excellent state of preservation when viewed last week. His process was a radical departure from the ordinary mode of embalming, by means of fluids. Dr. Holmes placed the body in a glass case and subjected it to pressure of a peculiar gas, the*

action of which hardened the flesh to a degree approaching the toughness of leather. That is all that is known of the process today."

"Dr. Holmes died two years ago, a poor man. Doubtless his invention could have made a fortune for a man possessing business ability, but that quality Dr. Holmes lacked. His discovery was appreciated by few and brought very little money to him."

"In a little frame house near Marcy Avenue and Broadway, Brooklyn, back of the store in which Dr. Holmes had his shop for many years, lives his widow. When seen by a Sun reporter yesterday she gave an account of Dr. Holmes' career. He was born in New York in 1818, but when very young moved to Brooklyn. After graduating from the University of the City of New York he studied medicine under Dr. Valentine, but never made a success at the profession. An appointment as examining physician to the Coroner stimulated his interest in the work of embalming, however, and the invention of his process followed."

"During the Civil War the success of his work on the bodies of prominent soldiers brought Dr. Holmes to the notice of President Lincoln, who became interested in his work and ordered that he should be employed at his death. President Lincoln personally paid the expense of fitting out a gunboat to carry the doctor and his assistants to the army at Fair Oaks, where he embalmed many of the prominent officers slain in the battle."

"When he moved to Brooklyn some years ago, Dr. Holmes advertised that he possessed a secret of a revolution in embalming, and explained that his process made the art of the Egyptians seem less wonderful. Then he invited the newspapers to investigate his patent and the representatives sent to see him were convinced that his claims were in no way exaggerated, and that his work was wonderful. He displayed specimens of his art, some of which had been embalmed for more than thirty years, and all were remarkable preserved. He was always known as an eccentric character and this failing explains, probably, the fact that he made no effort to hand down his discovery to posterity. His last request was that when he died his remains should not be embalmed and his wish was granted."

The writers feel that in this brief exposition of facts concerning Dr. Holmes we have effectively refuted the defamatory remarks directed at a man who devoted his entire life to improving the means of embalming. Our years of study of the man convince

us of his sense of honesty in what he claimed, and our research had confirmed at least 98% of his assertions, which is indeed a good average, under any system of judgment.

Sincere thanks are given to Kates-Boylston Publishing for permission to reprint excerpts of this article from August 1984 in the American Funeral Director. Also, thanks are given to the authors of this article for their important contribution in many aspects of embalming.

Reference

Dr. Thomas Holmes:The True Life and Career Of the Pioneer Embalmer by Edward C., Gail R., and Melissa Johnson; *The American Funeral Director*; August 1984; pp 32-36, 112-113.

Andersonville

By Steven Palmer

"*War is hell on earth*" - General William T. Sherman

Four companies of soldiers guarded Captain Henry Wirz as he was led to the gallows at Old Capitol Prison in Washington, D.C. on November 10, 1865.

Approximately 250 members of the public were given government tickets to watch the hanging. Captain Wirz climbed the stairs of the gallows as the spectators chanted "*Remember Andersonville!*" Wirz uttered his last words that he was "being hanged for following orders." A hood was placed on his head and at 10:32 the trap door opened. His body twitched and writhed as the noose tightened. Strangulation, not a broken neck, was his cause of death.

The Confederate Officer, commandant of Andersonville Prison, described by Post Trial Judge Advocate General Holt as a "demon", was dead.

Camp Sumter, built in Sumter County, Georgia, located near the southwestern town of Andersonville, was deemed an ideal spot as a military prison for the Confederate Army to keep Union prisoners. Originally built on 16.5 acres, it was meant to hold 10,000 prisoners. Massive pine logs made a solid wall and the inside had a 19 - 25 foot buffer "dead line" to keep prisoners away from the outer stockade wall. Any prisoners crossing that line would be shot on sight. The idea was to have temporary imprisonment as both sides made prisoner exchanges. It was an open-air enclosure with no structures for the prisoners to be housed in. There was no real medical care.

On April 12, 1864, black Union soldiers were massacred at Ft. Pillow, Tennessee. President Lincoln demanded that black soldiers be treated in the same way as white prisoners. Confederate President Jefferson Davis refused and prisoner exchanges came to a halt.

This made for a rapid increase of prisoners that would not be exchanged and would be interred for a long period. As the prison population swelled, conditions and rations (usually insect-infested cornmeal and raw bacon) worsened. Very soon 20,000 prisoners filled the stockade fences. Ten acres were added to the prison and the population rose to 33,000.

A river, named Sweet Water Branch, flowed through the camp that was polluted and putrid. This was the drinking and bathing water for the prisoners. Soon 100 prisoners were dying a day. Thieves and gangs of fellow prisoners called "*the Raiders*" stole food and any other supplies. 45,000 prisoners passed through the gates of

Andersonville Prison; 12,913 died within the prison walls, many from poor sanitation, scurvy, malaria and dysentery. They were placed in trench graves.

John L Ransom was Quartermaster of Company A, 9th Michigan Volunteer Cavalry. He was 20 years old when captured in Tennessee in 1861 and sent to Andersonville Prison. The Civil War Trust collected Ransom's diary of his time at Andersonville.

> *"Can see the dead wagon loaded up with twenty or thirty bodies at a time, two lengths, just like four foot wood is loaded to a wagon at the North, and away they go to the graveyard on a trot. Perhaps one or two will fall off and get run over. No attention paid to that, they are picked up on the road back. Was there never before in this world anything so terrible happening?"*

The prison at Andersonville stayed open until the conclusion of the war. In September 1864, General Sherman's army was approaching toward Andersonville. In November 1864, 13,000 seriously ill prisoners were released from the South: most were from Andersonville.

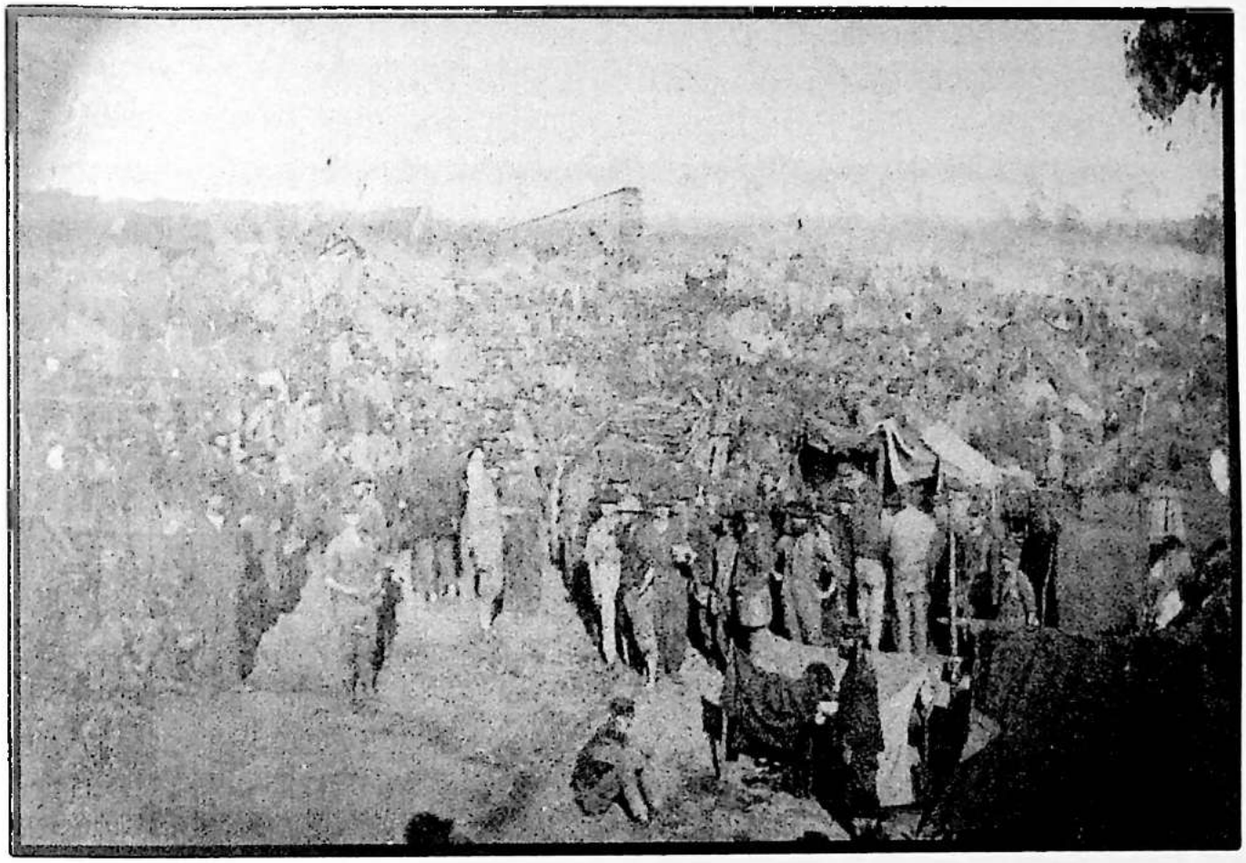
Andersonville Prison Commandant Captain Henry Wirz was taken into custody on May 7,1865 for war crimes. Wirz was accused of conspiracy to destroy prisoner's lives in violation of the laws and customs of war. It was an attempt to co-indict the Confederate hierarchy of Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon.

Wirz's trial produced 160 witnesses for the prosecution with tales of mistreatment. One prisoner, Felix de la Buame, testified that he saw Wirz shoot men. He was given a clerk's job at the Department of the Interior in appreciation. De la Baume was later identified as a deserter and was fired. He admitted perjury at the trial of Captain Wirz.

More Southern prisoners died in Northern prisons than Northern prisoners died in Southern prisons, but that information was kept from the trial. The defense was able to show the rations and care for the guards was at the same level as the prisoners and that proportionately as many guards died as prisoners.

The 13,000 prisoners who were buried in trench graves at Andersonville had their burial spots remembered by our government, 921 are marked "unknown." The Andersonville National Cemetery was established on June 26, 1865. There are now a total of 20,000 interred. It is one of 14 national cemeteries operated by the National Park Service. The Andersonville Prison Museum and the site of the Andersonville Prison surround the cemetery.

Clara Barton, the founder of the Red Cross went to Andersonville shortly after the prison was closed and worked diligently to record those buried in the prison cemetery. She strived to have every burial appropriately marked. Accompanying her group was former prisoner Dorrence Atwater. He had been assigned to record the names of the dead prisoners for the prison officials. It was his goal to have as few graves as possible marked "unknown."



Andersonville Prison

Special thanks to the author, Steven Palmer and the newspaper, "Funeral Home and Cemetery," November 4, 2015, for allowing us to reprint excerpts from this article.

Camp Douglas Prisoner of War Camp for Confederate Soldiers

by Todd Van Beck

The overall conditions of Civil War prisoner of war camps on both sides were so brutal and the evident lack of concern for human beings so evident, that looking back today people shake their heads in disbelief. Camp Douglas was no exception.

As the war escalated, the original purpose of Camp Douglas as a military training facility had to be changed to accommodate hundreds upon hundreds of Confederate prisoners of war who were eventually interred there. Camp Douglas Prison Camp became its new name.

The Douglas Property was in South Chicago not far from the University of Chicago and Lake Michigan. From the beginning there were problems at Camp Douglas. There were problems of sanitation, of security, the weather, and problems with complaining neighbors. It seems the prison camp was doomed from the start.

One significant complaining neighbor was the University of Chicago. which was located across the street from Camp Douglas. The University complained about odors, noise, screams, diseases of all types and lice. Some escaped prisoners even showed up for University classes uninvited! It was not without justification that the prestigious University of Chicago saw Camp Douglas as an annoying and dangerous nuisance.

Fueling this situation was the fact that the military management of Camp Douglas was incompetent. Greed and corruption was rampant. Record keeping was non-existent. Sewers were nothing more than shallow trenches which had no consistent flowing water supply. Disease was ever present and it was disease that terrified the prisoners most. Not the saber, or the bullet, or even the noose. Disease was more deadly to the prisoners than being shot in battle and they all knew it.

One aspect that no one could do anything about was the highly dramatic and brutal Chicago weather. The Chicago winters were just treacherous (particularly for soldiers from the Deep South who were used to natural warm weather all year long.) Shelters for the prisoners were woefully inadequate, medical attention when it could be found was a farce, healthy food and nutrition was rare, and the military leadership of Camp Douglas changed as regularly as the Chicago weather did – truth was no one wanted the job of managing this hell hole.

A major failure on the part of the government was in not providing a cemetery. The military leaders ended up depending on a place called "Potter's Field" which was a

part of the City Cemetery of Chicago. (Interestingly this is where the world famous Chicago's Lincoln Park is located today.)

Another haunting fact about Camp Douglas is that numbers concerning just how many people died, how many people were buried and where they are buried have one thing in common: they are all wrong. All the numbers pertaining to Camp Douglas are in the end mere speculation. No one will ever know for sure. Some scholars estimate that approximately 3400 Confederate soldiers were buried in Chicago's Potter's Field. Other scholars use the number of 6000! Quite a difference between these two figures!

Regardless of the inaccuracy of actual number concerning Camp Douglas, one thing is for sure; while Potter's Field was indeed a part of the Chicago City Cemetery, it was the worst burial site imaginable as it lay right in the sandy soil on the shore of Lake Michigan which meant that the graves were in the direct path of massive water flows which were created by the Great Lake.

The Confederate soldiers were buried in this sandy soil where the tide and waves from Lake Michigan ended up destroying almost any sign as to where any Confederate prisoner had been buried.

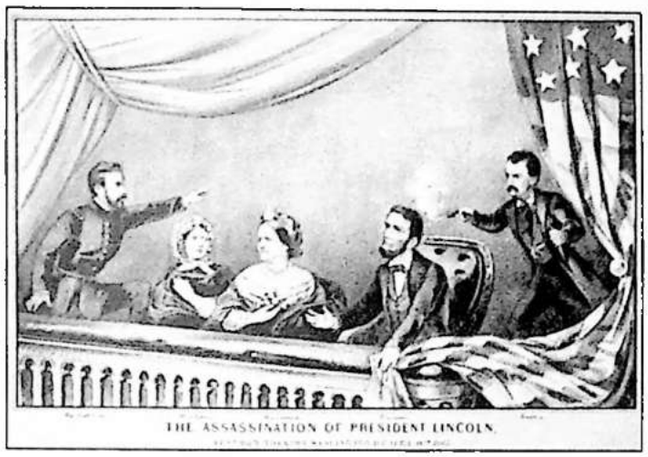
Because of the sloppy system of record keeping and the highly vulnerable location of Potter's Field, the reality was that hundreds of the Confederate dead prisoners were simply washed out into Lake Michigan. For years after the Civil War bodies washed up on the Lake's shores. Were they actually Confederate prisoners?

Many dead bodies that were simply washed out into the lake were then caught by strong water currents and taken south one mile and ended up being sucked into the metal filter grate at the water intake crib which furnished the water supply for the citizens of Chicago.

There were also reliable reports of grave robbers violating Potter's Field. The crafty grave robbers had also figured out that instead of actually digging decedents up from their sandy graves, they could just patiently wait for Lake Michigan to do their work for them. After the water of Lake Michigan had eroded the graves and after the bodies had floated out into the lake, the grave robbers would get into boats, row out onto the lake waters and there would retrieve the floating descents. Sometimes they would hover in dark of night around the water intake crib where they knew that bodies would stack up against the intake grate. Then one of the grave robbers who knew how to swim would dive into the water, swim down to the dead, tie a rope around the decedent's neck and the others in the boat would bring the body to the surface. It was a pretty ghoulish business.

A Nation Grieves

Preparation for Lincoln's Funeral Took Four Days



The East room was draped with crepe and black cloth, as well as white flowers. The casket lay on an elevated platform covered with a domed canopy of black cloth lined beneath with fluted white silk. Mourners would later remark on the abundance and beauty of the floral tributes, which at the time were not a common fixture at funerals.

From the time Lincoln's body was made ready for burial, it was watched night and day by a guard of honor, the members of which were one major-general, the brigadier-general, two field officers, and four line-officers of the army and four of the navy.

After funeral services and the procession that followed the next morning, the coffin was taken to the train depot. Edward M Stanton, Gideon Welles, Hugh McCulloch, John Palmer Usher, Lt. Gen. Ulysses S Grant, and Montgomery C Meigs left the escort at the depot, and at 8 a.m. on April 21 the train departed. At least 10,000 people witnessed the train's departure from Washington, and it is estimated that more than one million people greeted the funeral train along its route.

Lincoln's funeral train consisted of nine cars, including baggage and hearse car. Eight of the cars were provided by the chief railways over which the remains were transported; the ninth was the president's car, which had been built for use by the president and other officials and contained a parlor, sitting room and sleeping apartment.

Now it was draped in mourning and contained the coffins of Lincoln and his son. Different locomotives were used on different stretches of the trip. The train was preceded (10 minutes ahead) by a pilot locomotive and one car to ensure that the track ahead was unobstructed.

The Department of War designated the route and declared railroads over which the remains passed as military needs under the control of the director and superintendent of the U.S. Military Railroads. No person was allowed to be transported on the cars except those authorized by the War Department, and, to avoid accidents, the train never exceeded 20 miles an hour. Five relatives and family friends were officially appointed to accompany the funeral train and four accompanied the train in an official capacity.

A reporter traveling with the train as it made its way to Springfield wrote about the typical events when the funeral made a stop.

> *"The funeral car by which the remains were carried in the procession is a most superb piece of mechanism. The main platform is 14 feet long, eight wide and 15 high. On this platform, which is five feet from the ground, is a dais...on which the coffin rests. Above the dais is an elegant canopy, supported by four columns curving upward at the center and surmounted by a miniature temple of Liberty. The platform is covered with black cloth, which falls at the sides nearly to the ground, and is edged with silver bullion fringe. Festoons of black cloth also hang from the sides, festooned with silver stars and also edged with silver bullion. The canopy is trimmed in like manner with black cloth festoons and spangled with silver bullion. The corners were surmounted with a rich plume of black and white feathers. At the base of each column are three American flags, slightly inclined, festooned and covered with crepe.*

The temple of Liberty is represented as deserted, having no emblems of any kind in or around it, except a small flag on the top at half-mast. The inside of the car is lined with white satin flutia. From the center of the roof is suspended a large eagle with outspread wings, having in his talons a laurel wreath. The platform round the coffin was strewn with flowers.

As the president's coffin was moved into the car containing it, its splendor and magnificence for the first time became visible to the spectators, and its magnificence could not be surpassed. Its entire cost was about $2,000, and it is probably the most perfect and finished thing of the kind ever manufactured in this country..."

Observers noted that death had frozen Lincoln's face with all the character and idiosyncrasy of life, preserving his grave features, in a bloodless hue not that distant from his natural sallow coloration. His beard was shaved close, save for the tuft on his chin. His mouth was shut, *"like that of one who had put the foot down firm, and so are the eyes, which look as calm as slumber."*

When the funeral train arrived in Springfield, Brown and local undertaker Thomas Lynch purchased rough chalk, ash and some brushes to freshen Lincoln's face, which had blackened due to the effects of the head wound. Ironically, undertakers infused so much embalming fluid that the body had become virtually mummified, making the features quite recognizable when the coffin was opened before final burial in 1901.

Lincoln's death triggered the beginning of the modern day funeral service because he was the first public figure to be embalmed and put on view for almost three weeks. The embalming technique used on the president had primarily been used on Civil War soldiers before transport home for burial.

President Lincoln's public viewing introduced the benefits of embalming, which many previously had considered a barbaric violation of the body. Mourners were able to see the late president for 20 days and perceptions began to change, making embalming a desirable option.

A Bizarre Plot

The story behind the 1901 exhumation of the body of Abraham Lincoln began nearly three decades earlier with the actions of a bumbling counterfeiting ring in central Illinois. Once the ring's master engraver, Ben Boyd, was imprisoned, the gang was running out of counterfeit bills. That's when the gang's leader, "Big Jim" Kinealy came up with a plan to steal Lincoln's body and hold it until the government paid $200,000 ransom and freed Ben Boyd.

Initially, the plot was interrupted when one of Big Jim's co-conspirators, thoroughly inebriated, revealed the plot to a female companion. The woman, in turn, shared the plot with her circle of friends....and soon the scheme to steal Lincoln's remains was known throughout Springfield.

The Gang Left Town

Now living in Chicago, Kinealy opened a saloon. There, one of his regular customers, Lewis G. Swegles, was invited to join Kinealy's gang. Unbeknownst to Kinealy, Swegles was a Secret Service agent, looking into counterfeiting activities. His gang then hatched another plot to steal Lincoln's body on the evening after the November 1876 election, when the miscreants felt the Oak Ridge Cemetery would be empty. The plan was to put Lincoln's body in a sack and take it by horse-drawn wagon to northern Indiana. There, they would hide it among the sand dunes until the furor died down and they could demand a ransom and Boyd's release.

At the cemetery on the appointed evening, just as the gang cut the lock off the door of Lincoln's tomb and were about to lift the casket out of the sarcophagus, Swegles, whose job it was to position the wagon where the sacked remains could be loaded, signaled to eight detectives hiding nearby. Weapons drawn, the detectives rushed to the tomb, but the grave robbers escaped. Ten days later, the gang was captured, and Lincoln's son Robert hired attorneys to prosecute them. Terrence Mullen and John Hughes were found guilty and sentenced to a year in Joliet State Prison.

Exhuming Lincoln

Decades passed, and by 1900 the monument at Lincoln's tomb was in need of major reconstruction. Over the 25 months during which it was being rebuilt, Lincoln's pine coffin was laid in a temporary grave nearby.

Finally, in August 1901, the monument was complete and the coffin was reinterred. But in September, Robert Lincoln visited the tomb and decided that the project was not complete. Remembering the 1876 attempted grave robbery, he wanted to ensure that no one would ever be able to disturb the resting place of his father. So he ordered that the coffin be placed in a cage some 10 feet below ground and encased in concrete. He got the idea from the burial of George Pullman, inventor of the Pullman sleeping railroad car.

On September 26, 1901, the new tomb was ready. When it was time to transfer the coffin into the tomb, discussion arose about whether the coffin should be opened, for there were persistent rumors that Lincoln's body was not in the coffin, and this would be the last opportunity to put those rumors to rest. Some observers thought that

opening the coffin would be disrespectful, while others believed that the remains should be identified. The decision was reached to open the coffin.

Accordingly, Leon P. Hopkins and his nephew, Charles K. Willey, both plumbers, carved a piece out of the top of the lead-lined coffin, exposing the fallen president's head and shoulders. Each of the 23 people present said that a choking smell emerged from the coffin. Then each passed before the coffin and looked down. All agreed that the features of the body in the coffin were clearly those of Abraham Lincoln. Still visible were the whiskers on his chin, a wart on his cheek, and his coarse black hair, although his eyebrows had vanished. Also clearly visible was his black suit, the same suit he had worn to his second inauguration, although it was covered by yellow mold.

The section of the coffin that had been removed was then soldered back into place, the coffin was lowered into the crate, and the whole affair was covered with two tons of cement. Lincoln's body had been moved 17 times since his death, but this would be its last stop.

In 1928, J.C. Thompson, one of the witnesses who viewed the body said,

> *"As I came up I saw the top-knot of Mr. Lincoln: his hair was coarse and thick, like a horse's, he used to say, and it stood up high in front. When I saw that, I knew that it was Mr. Lincoln. Anyone who had ever seen his pictures would have known it was him. His features had not decayed. He looked just like a statue of himself lying there..."*

Fleetwood Lindley, another witness, who was just 13 when he saw the body, was the last of 23 witnesses to view Lincoln's exhumation. Just before his death in 1963, he was interviewed about that historic day. *"Yes, his face was chalky white,"* said Lindley. *"His clothes were mildewed. And I was allowed to hold one of the leather straps as we lowered the casket for the concrete to be poured. I was not scared at the time, but I slept with Lincoln for the next six months."*

Credit for the condition of Lincoln's body must go to undertaker Dr. Charles D. Brown of the firm Brown and Alexander. It was theorized that Lincoln had been embalmed so many times on board his funeral train, that he had been practically mummified.

Both father and son are permanently interred at Oak Ridge Cemetery in Springfield. Lincoln's burial and reburial site in Illinois attracts more than a million visitors every year.

Reference

Texas Director, April 2013

When Death Stalked the Whitehouse

In the beautifully furnished Prince of Wales guest room in the White House, little William "Willie" Wallace Lincoln lay ill. His feverish form was dwarfed by the oversized bed with a towering ornately-covered rosewood headboard and equally ornate footboard, now known as the Lincoln Bed.

During this illness, President Abraham Lincoln's son was attended by Dr. Robert K. Stone, the family physician. His parents were in nearby constant attendance during his illness and in constant grief after his death.

> "*Mrs. Lincoln did all a mother ought or could during Willie's sickness - she never left his side at all after he became dangerous, and almost wore herself out while watching and she mourns as no one but a mother can at her son's death,*" reported Benjamin B French. *"All the folk medicines in Washington - and many were given to Willie from Peruvian bark to beef tea - could not save him."*

Elizabeth Keckley, a former slave who moved to the White House to assist Mrs. Lincoln, later recorded her memories of Willie's illness, which had begun shortly before a major White House reception was to be held on Feb. 5, 1862.

> *"Finding Willie continuing to grow worse, Mrs. Lincoln determined to withdraw her cards of invitation and postpone the reception. Mr. Lincoln thought that the cards had better not be withdrawn. At least he advised that the doctor be consulted before any steps were taken. Accordingly, Sr.*

Robert K Stone was called in. He pronounced Willie better and said that there was every reason for an early recovery. He thought, since the invitations had been issued, it would be best to go on with the reception. Willie, he insisted, was in no immediate danger.

Mrs. Lincoln was guided by these counsels, and no postponement was announced. On the morning of the reception, Willie was suddenly taken worse. His mother sat by his bedside a long while, holding his feverish hand in her own, and watching his labored breathing. The doctors claimed there was no cause for alarm.

The reception was a large and brilliant one, and the rich notes of the Marine band in the apartments below came to the sick-room in soft, subdued murmurs, like the wild, faint sobbing of far off spirits. Some of the young people had suggested dancing, but Mr. Lincoln met the suggestion with an emphatic veto.

"The night passed slowly; morning came, and Willie was worse. He lingered a few days, and at 5 p.m. on February 20, 1862, Willie died. God called the beautiful spirit home, and the house of joy was turned into the house of mourning.

"I was worn out with watching and was not in the room when Willie died, but was immediately sent for. I assisted in washing him and dressing him, and then laid him on the bed, when Mr. Lincoln came in. I never saw a man so bowed down with grief. He came to the bed, lifted the cover from the face of his child, gazed at it long and earnestly, murmuring 'My poor boy, he was too good for this earth. God has called him home. I know that he is much better off in heaven, but then we loved him so. It is hard, to have him die!'

"Great sobs choked his utterance. He buried his head in his hands, and his tall frame was convulsed with emotion. I stood at the foot of the bed, my eyes full of tears, looking at the man in silent, awe-stricken wonder."

Willie was the third son born to the Lincolns in Illinois, arriving on Dec. 21, 1850 the same year Eddie, their second son, died. Their oldest son - Robert - a student at Harvard College - was the only Lincoln child who would outlive his parents.

Mary Lincoln was inconsolable. To add to the anguish, Tad, her youngest son, lay seriously ill in another room. Both children apparently suffered from typhoid fever, a common illness in disease-ridden Washington, D.C.

At the time of her son Willie's death, Mrs. Lincoln had been impressed by the reports she heard of famed embalmer, Thomas Holmes. She decided to invite two of the outstanding embalming surgeons of the time, Dr. Charles Da Costa Brown, and Dr. Joseph Alexander, to come to the White House to prepare her son's body. At that time, the Lincolns planned to return their son's body to Springfield for final interment so he could be buried beside his brother.

The president, however, changed his mind about that at the last minute. Instead, he accepted an offer from a friend William Thomas Carroll, to place Willie's body in one of the empty crypt spaces available in the Carroll family tomb in nearby Georgetown. Once Lincoln's presidency was over, Willie's body would be moved to a final resting place Springfield, where Abe and Mary Lincoln planned to live out their retirement from public life.

The days following little Willie Lincoln's death were extremely difficult. History notes the president did not fare well.

Willie lay in a flower-covered Metallic coffin designed to resemble rosewood, with his name and date of birth and death inscribed on a silver plate. Friends came to pay their respects on Feb. 24, the morning of the funeral.

Just before the service, the Lincoln family gathered around the coffin for a private farewell.

Benjamin French, who supervised the arrangements wrote,

> "*While they were thus engaged, there came one of the heaviest storms of rain and wind that has visited this city for years, and the terrible storm without seemed almost in unison with the storm of grief within, for Mrs. Lincoln, I am told, was terribly affected by her loss and almost refused to be comforted.*"

The funeral began at 2 p.m. in the East Room, where crimson velvet drapes hung at every window and the room's huge gilt mirrors having been draped in mourning, with black fabric covering the frames and white fabric draped to cover the glass. Dr. Phineas D. Gurley, pastor of the nearby New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, conducted the service. The Lincoln family regularly attended Dr. Gurley's Church, where Willie had recently told his Sunday School teacher he wanted to become a teacher or preacher of the gospel.

At the funeral, Rev. Gurley said:

> "*The beloved youth whose death we now and here lament was a child of bright intelligence and of popular promise. He possessed many excellent*

qualities of mind and heart which greatly endeared him not only to the family circle but to all his youthful acquaintances and friends. His mind was active, he was inquisitive and conscientious, his disposition was amiable and affectionate. His impulses kind and generous, his words and manners were gentle and attractive. It is easy to see how a child thus endowed could, in the course of 11 years, entwine himself around the hearts of those who knew him best."

Most of the mourners accompanied the body to Oak Hill Cemetery in Georgetown, creating a long procession. Two white horses drew the child's hearse, while two black horses pulled Lincoln's carriage down Washington's unpaved streets and up the hill on the cemetery.

When the procession arrived at the cemetery, Willie's body was placed in the small chapel for a brief service of scripture and prayer. His remains were later transferred to the Carroll family vault. This vault, purchased by William and Sallie Carroll in 1857, contained the bodies of their own sons.

The president could not bear the idea of having Willie so far away from him just yet. In fact, Lincoln returned to the cemetery the next day to watch the body as it was moved from the cemetery chapel to the crypt itself. Word later got out that the president returned to the tomb on two occasions and had Willie's coffin opened.

Doctors Brown and Alexander had embalmed Willie so perfectly that everyone said the child just seemed to be sleeping.

After the funeral, Lincoln tried to go about his work, but his will had been crushed with grief. One week after the funeral, he closed himself up in his office all day and cried.

The president's minister, Dr. Phineas Gurley, later wrote:

"Willie's death was a great blow to Mr. Lincoln, coming as it did in the midst of the war, when his burdens seemed already greater than he could bear. The little boy was always interested in the war and used to go down to the White House stables and read the battle news to the employees and talk over the outcome."

Continued Gurley:

"These men all loved him and thought for one of his years, he was most unusual". When he was dying he said to me, *"Doctor Gurley, I have six one-dollar gold pieces in my bank over there on the mantel. Please send them to the missionaries for me."*

After Willie's funeral service, the president did withdraw even further into himself and began looking into the spiritual matters that had interested him for so long.

Some Lincoln scholars say it is more than possible that Lincoln not only believed in the supernatural but actually participated in it. Many have scoffed and said that the president had no time for ghosts and spirits, but there are others who say that he actually attended séances held in the White House. Whether he accepted the movement or not, it is a fact that many spiritualists were often guests there. Several of them passed along warnings about the dark shadows that hung over his life. Lincoln himself, so it was said, became convinced that he was doomed and adopted a very fatalistic attitude during his presidency, especially after Willie's death.

The president began to speak of how Willie's spirit remained with him and his presence was often felt in his home and office. Some mediums theorized that Lincoln's obsession with the boy's death may have caused Willie's spirit to linger behind, refusing for his father's sake to pass on to the other side.

Regardless of how he felt about Willie's spirit, Lincoln probably avoided connections to the Washington spiritualists, so much of what is written about his contact with them comes through accounts and diaries written by friends and acquaintances.

But while her husband avoided spiritualists in public, Mary Lincoln embraced them openly. She was quick to turn to contact with "the other side" for comfort after her son's death. Once Willie was gone, Mary never again entered the White House guest room where he died or the room in which the funeral viewing was held.

Reference

Texas Director, April 2013

Signals from the Grave

Early patents for detecting life in buried persons
from *American Artifacts, Issue 45, July 1999*

Richard Van Vleck

Bordering on the bizarre, the U.S. patents described here reflect a concern on the part of some that persons might be buried prematurely. It was feared that the vital signs of person in a coma or "suspended animation: would not be detected. As embalming became more widespread, this concern became a moot point, except, perhaps, to be most gullible.

At least some of these grave signals and life preserving devises were likely made and marketed, but I know of no examples or even advertising existing. It is not likely that grave signals would have been marketed to undertakers, since they would have been fairly confident that the corpse was not going to rise up after they had finished their work. However, some of these patents cover devices which can be pulled from the ground without disturbing the casket after an appropriate time had passed and the signal not activated. Making the grave signal recyclable for use on another grave would seem to have appealed to the mortician or cemetery operator, rather than the bereaved.

The first such patent, granted to Christian Eisenbrandt, of Baltimore, in 1843, was for a spring-loaded coffin lid. Unlike the later patents, this escape device would function only until the time of burial.

> "-- *Whereas there have been instances of human beings having been buried alive, the inventor of this coffin has contrived an arrangement whereby anyone who may not really have departed this life may be the slightest motion of either the head or hand acting upon a system of springs and leavers cause the instantaneous opening of the coffin lid."*

The next patent for a life signal, granted to Franz Vester, of Newark, NJ in 1868, was designed to function after burial. "--*The nature of this invention consists in placing on the lid of the coffin, and directly over the face of the body laid therein, a square tube which extends from the coffin up through and over the surface of the grave, said tube containing a ladder and a cord, one end of the cord being placed in the hand of the person laid in the coffin and the other end of said cord being attached to a bell on the top of the square tube, so that, should a person be interred ere life is extinct, he can, on recovery to consciousness, ascend from the grave by the ladder, or if not able to ascent by said ladder, ring the bell, thereby giving an alarm and thus saving himself."*

In 1871, a patent was granted to Theodore Schroeder and Hermann Wuest, of Hoboken, NJ for a "life detector for coffins" which resembled a giant ear trumpet. The mechanism was simply a chain placed in the hand of the corpse, which, if pulled, would ring a bell and release a latch, causing a door to fall open, admitting air to the coffin and serving as a signal flag. An alternative mechanism in this patent substituted an electromagnet to actuate the latch trip and an electric bell to sound the alarm, requiring, of course, a charged battery to operate both.

The next grave signal to be patented was invented by Albert Fearnaught, of Indianapolis, in 1882. A rope tied around the wrist of the corpse, if tugged, would release a spring-loaded red flag at the surface to alert any bystander that the buried person wished to be disinterred.

Also patented in 1882, by John Krichbaum, of Youngstown, OH, was an odd device consisting of a bar placed in the hands of the corpse and extending to the surface and into a glass enclosure where a pointer and numbers apparently indicated any movement of the bar. Krichbum mentions that the device is used for "persons buried under doubt of being in a trace".

Charles Sieber and Frederick Borntraeger, of Waterloo, IL, received a patent for a "grave signal for people buried in a trance" in 1885. Along with the by then unusual electromagnetic bell alarm and pop-up flag activated by a string tied to the finger of the corpse, this patent activated by the finger string and a lamp and window at the bottom of a tube for viewing the face of the corpse from the surface.

Carl Redi, of Vienna, patented a life signal in 1887 with mechanical air flaps and an electromagnetic bell, describing one version for burial and another for use in a vault.

In 1893, a patent was granted to Adalbert Kwiatkowski, of Germany, for a coffin signal using a long spring-loaded flag within a tube extending to the surface and a complex linkage with a bridle resting on the forehead of the corpse and ropes around the hands.

A simplified grave signal was patented by Hubert Deveau, of New York in 1894. A pipe extended from the coffin top directly over the head of the corpse to the surface and enclosed a rod which when pushed upward by the person's head, opened a valve at the top end, allowing air into the pipe and down to the coffin. The valve was enclosed in a glass cylinder and its movement upward served as the signal. Once pushed up, it remained in that position until an alert cemetery attendant would notice its position and begin digging.

In 1895, Franz Egerland and John Freese, of Sioux Falls, SD, patented a simplified coffin signal in which the electric switch and early dry cell were located in the

coffin, with wires running up a small diameter air tube to a top mounted buzzer. Rather than using a valve mechanism on the air tube, it was left open and had a disinfectant globe mounted halfway up the pipe to prevent the discharge of "obnoxious gases" from the coffin.

M.C.H. Nicolle of France, patented a somewhat bizarre coffin signal in 1899 in which a hammer is released by movement of the corpse, swinging down and breaking a glass window directly over the head, allowing air to enter the previously sealed coffin. The alarm is simply the sound of the breaking glass, since the device is used only before burial. If anyone ever did wake from a trance in one of these coffins and lift their heads, the result would appear to be a face full of broken glass followed by a blow from the falling hammer.

In 1900, Walter McKnight, of Buffalo, NY patented an all-electric device for "indicating the awakening of persons buried alive". In addition to the usual air-pipe to the surface, a large electromagnet (solenoid) in an enclosure on the surface, pulled up a cap on the air pipe when movement of the corpse's hands closed a switch. An electric bell was mounted outside the enclosure.

A telegraphic grave signal device was patented in 1901 by Monroe Griffith of Sioux City, IA. In addition to the wiring of hands and feet to signal awakening and movement of the corpse, switches under the corpse would close if the body were lifted by grave robbers. Rather than using a buzzer above the grave, the wires lead to a central office such as the home of the cemetery sexton or police station.

Going Out in Style: Hearses through History

by Joy Neighbors

In the funeral industry, a hearse is known as a funeral coach. The term hearse (herse) is actually from the 13th century and referred to a type of plow. The word was also used for the triangular form that held candles during religious ceremonies. These "candelabras" were also placed on the top of the coffin as the body was taken to its burial place.

Early History

A bier was the first type of carrying device used to move remains. Made up of a flat wooden form, the body, wrapped in a shroud, or the coffin box was placed upon this framework and carried by hand to the burial place. This framework became known as a hearse: a way to transport the body or coffin. Biers are still used today but are made of aluminum and have wheels for ease of movement. Also known as a church truck, it is used to move the casket to and from the church or funeral home. Dignitaries and heads of state are also placed on biers to lie in state before funeral services are held. These hand-carried hearses evolved into horse-drawn wagons during the 17th century.

19th Century

By the 19th century, wooden hearses were becoming more elaborate with intricately carved flowers, doves and scrolls, and heavy velvet draperies hung on both sides of the carriage. Hearses were usually crafted from mahogany wood. In 1850, Crane, Breed & Company of Cincinnati began producing metal caskets. Four years later the company was also building horse-drawn hearses. In the 1880s the cities of Baltimore and Chicago each designed trolley funeral cars which ran on the electric trolley railways. These special trolleys were used to transport a casket and the mourners out to the cemeteries located at the edge of town.

Early 20th Century

It was not until the beginning of the 20th century and the invention of the motorized vehicle that hearses received a tremendous updating. On May 1, 1908 the General Vehicle Company of New York rolled out the first electric hearse. But by 1909, Crane and Breed had introduced the first motorized mass-produced funeral coach called the Auto Hearse. This was also the first year that a totally motorized funeral was held. When Chicago resident Wilfrid A. Pruyn died, H.D. Ludlow, a local ambulance and funeral service, agreed to furnish a motorized hearse. Since Ludlow did not have one, he had one provided by the C.A. Coey Auto Livery Company. Coey adapted a horse-

drawn hearse by placing the framework on the chassis of an opera bus.

The 1920s brought about several changes and adaptions to the motorized hearse. In 1920, hearses were beginning to resemble the passenger limousine that was popular with the well-to-do. Three-way coaches were introduced near the end of the Roaring '20s. This allowed the casket table to move in order to be loaded and unloaded from either side of the hearse, or through the back door. Since streets were still unpaved, people liked the convenience of being able to load and unload the casket out of the mud.

The 1930s

During the Art Deco Movement of the 1930s, art-carved hearses became popular. These hearses featured hand-carved wooden panels that resembled heavily draped curtains and were placed on the side windows for privacy. This style of hearse was made until the late 1940's. In 1938, Sayers and Scovill introduced the landau style of hearse. Landau is a term from the Victorian era, which meant carriage bars that could fold and unfold, opening up part of the carriage to the elements. It was adapted to the motorized vehicle creating a semi-convertible where the rear quarter of the car could be opened up by folding the cover at the landau joints. The funeral industry embraced the look and the leather-backed hearse with its faux landau bar became popular. Today, the S-shaped landau bars are still visible on many hearses.

1940s

Funeral coach production was on the increase when WWII broke out and factories were converted for wartime production. By the end of the war, many funeral coach companies had experienced financial losses and were forced to close.

Mid-Twentieth Century

After the war, landau and limousine style hearses were both popular. Draperies lost some of their intricate draping and became sleeker and straighter based on the look of airline drapes. During the 1970s, hearses were downsized due to the gasoline crisis.

Until the end of the '70s, it was typical for a hearse to be built on a combination-chassis, (usually Cadillac), meaning that the professional framework was constructed for use as a hearse or an ambulance. The rear compartment was then fitted to carry either a gurney or casket.

Today

Funeral coaches were downsized again at the end of the 1990s and today some modern fleets, especially in Europe, include medium-sized vans that have been

converted into funeral hearses. Also, the limousine style is preferred in Europe with lots of glass and few draperies allowing the windows to be unobscured.

In the U.S, the landau style is still popular, bearing the trademark leather or vinyl roof with the faux S-shaped bars, and curtains at the windows. The windows may also be frosted or opaque without curtains. Some hearses have skylights, sidewall decorations and track lighting. Current versions are boxy in the rear, resembling a car and van in the styling. The current cost of a hearse is around $100,000.

Sincere thanks are given to Joy Neighbors for permission to reprint this article.

How Hearses Work

No major American automobile manufacturer builds hearses at the factory. General Motors has no hearse division, neither does Ford or Chrysler (or, for that matter, Honda, Mazda, or Toyota). Instead, most hearses are hand-crafted by companies that take the bodies of existing cars and customize them, making them longer and adding special purpose parts. Let's look at how this process works.[339]

Although the ambulance industry moved several decades ago to using trucks as their base vehicle, hearse makers prefer to use luxury cars from companies like Cadillac, Lincoln and Buick. To turn a luxury car into a hearse, the electrical system and all vital fluid lines are removed and a circular saw is used to cut the car into two halves, a front half and a rear half. These two halves are then fitted onto a longer chassis, often supplied by the original manufacturer, and overlaid with a molded fiberglass shell that connects the front half with the back half. The shell is painted to match the rest of the vehicle, the electrical system and fluid lines are reattached and now the car resembles what we think of as a hearse. But the custom-build isn't quite that simple.[340]

The largest manufacturer of hearses in the United States today is Accubuilt, Inc., of Lima, Ohio. Over the years a number of major hearse-makers have merged and are now part of Accubuilt. These hearse-makers include Superior Coach, Eureka, Miller-Meteor, and Sayers and Scovil, names that will be instantly recognizable to anyone interested in funeral coaches. Accubuilt currently builds 60 percent of the hearses used at American funerals. In fact, Accubuilt supplied the hearse for the 2004 funeral of former President Ronald Reagan as well as the limousines for his funeral procession.

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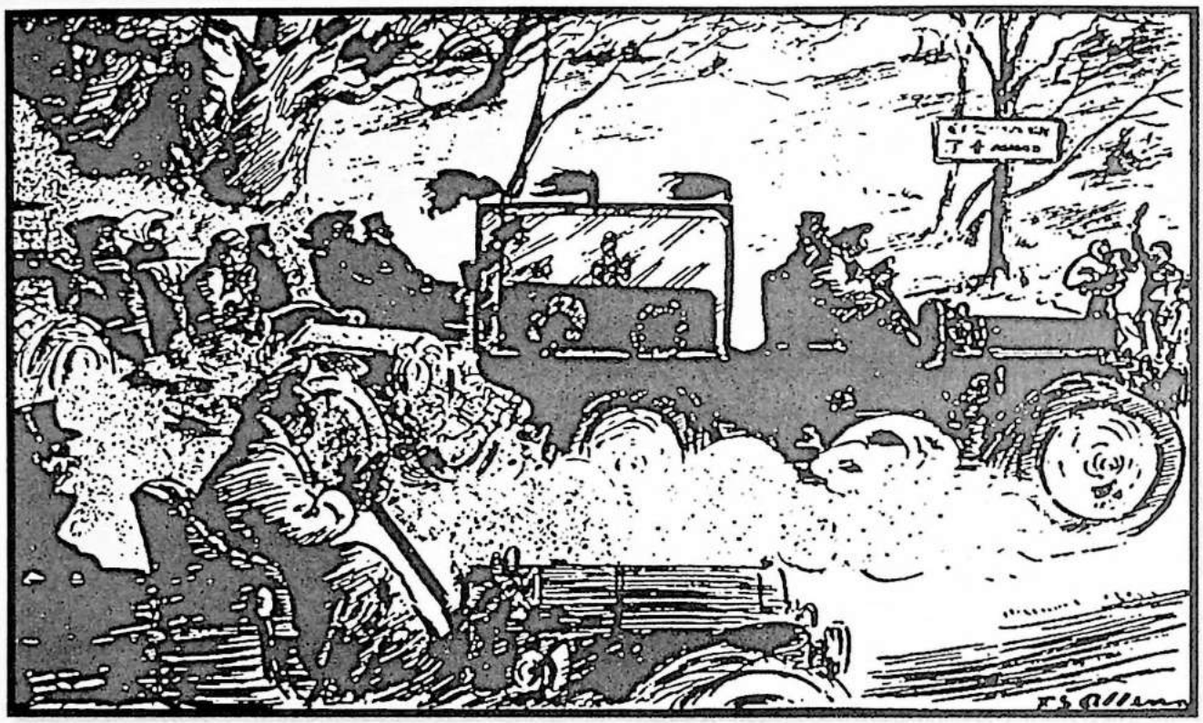
[339] Neighbors, Joy, April 25, 2014, Going Out in Style, Hearses Through History, retrieved May 1, 2015 from https://agraveinterest.blogspot.com/2014/04/going-out-in-style-hearses-through.html

[340] Lampton, Christopher, (n.d.) How Hearses Work, retrieved April 19, 2016 from the How Stuff Works website at http://auto.howstuffworks.com/hearse2.htm

Other hearse-makers included Wolfington Body Company and Binz Hearses. The latter builds hearses on the Mercedes-Benz chassis.[341]



This cartoon warned the public to beware of automobile hearses in 1919. The caption of the cartoon concluded that going 16 m.p.h. to the cemetery was undignified and would be the ruin of undertakers.

Photo and caption courtesy of Todd VanBeck

[341] Lampton, Christopher, (n.d.) How Hearses Work, retrieved April 19, 2016 from the How Stuff Works website at http://auto.howstuffworks.com/hearse2.htm

A Brief History of the Obituary

Obituary is from the Latin word obit, meaning death. The word obituary has been used to refer to published death notices since the 18th century. Although brief announcements of deaths were published in America as early as the 16th century, it took another 300 years and some impetus from the British (who beat us to the punch) for the longer, more-detailed accounts to appear in American press. Obits have historically been penned about people like soldiers, public servants, celebrities and adventurers because according to historian Mitchel Stevens, the audience hangs with such interest on the details of their lives and unfortunately their deaths.

Over time obituary style has reflected the frame of mind. Accounts of deaths of frontiersmen and women emphasized value of life whereas those of Civil War soldiers were often sentimental and religious. Beginning in the 1880s, a trend called death journalism inhabited newspaper obits in England and the United States. During this time, obituaries focused on the graphic and often morbid details of the person's demise. The New York Times piece on the death of Theodore Roosevelt, for example, leads with an elaborate description of the blood clot that "detached itself from a vein and entered the lungs."

During the late 20th century, obituary writing reinvigorated the rise of the "common man" obit, which recognized ordinary people as well as the aristocracy. Among the pioneers of this genre is Robin Hinch of the Orange County Register, whose candid and folksy tributes have been emulated around the country.

Reference:

A Brief History of the Obituary, (n.d.) retrieved from the Funeral Consumers Information Society website: http://www.funeralinformationsociety.org/yourlastwrites/history.html

Obituaries from the Past

John P. Smith was born September 7th, 1850 and died December 13th, 1911, aged 61 years, 3 months and 3 days. He was married to Ellen Moorehouse September 9th, 1879, and to this union were born fourteen children, five of whom have passed from this world of sorrow to the sweet home of the blest. He leaves a widow and nine children to mourn his loss of a departed husband and father.

Mr. Smith was a member of the Christian Church and lived a true and devoted Christian until his death. He was ever ready to do his part and his loss will be keenly felt by all who know him. To the bereaved ones we would say may his memory sweeten your life, and may you so live that at last you will all meet again on the other side where no parting words shall ever be spoken.

Farewell Father! We will miss you when our span of life is fled. And with smiles and songs will greet you, where no farewell tears are shed. How sad to stand around him when they raised the coffin lid, for the last look to be taken and then be forever hid. At the close of that sad evening as the sun sinks in the west They lowered the still cold body down to its final rest.

T.J. Dennis Alonzo Wright was born December 13, 1879 and died August 28, 1921, making his age 42 years, 4 months and 15 days. On April 20, 1910 he was united in marriage to Miss Ora Hough. To this union were born seven children, five daughters and two sons. Three daughters and one son preceded him into the Great Beyond.

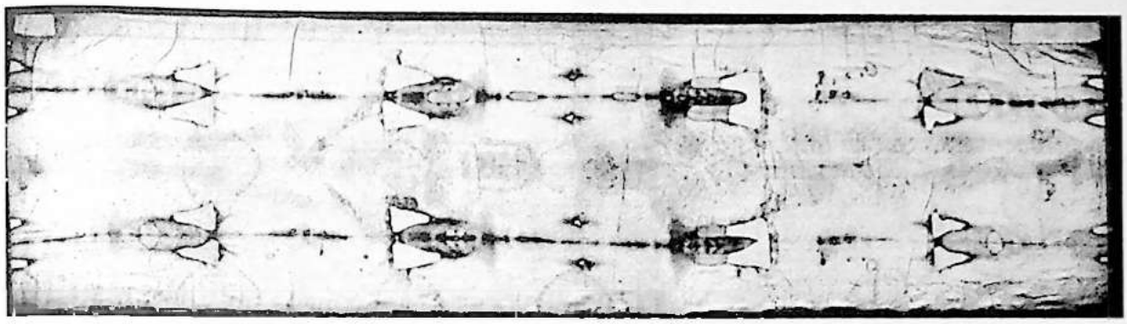
He leaves to mourn for him his wife, one son, Victor and two daughters, Isabel and baby Josephine; two sisters and three brothers and a host of other relatives.

Funeral services were held at the Hough Chapel Monday, conducted by Rev. C.W. Green. The pallbearers were: 2 brothers, Herbert and LeRoy Wright and four brothers-in-law, Ernest, Ashford and Elva Hough and Arthur O'Quinn. The choir sang "Nearer My God, to Thee," "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," "Over There," "Saved by Grace" and "God Be with You till We Meet Again."

In his boyhood Mr. Wright gave his heart to Christ and has since lived a constant Christian life, always doing what he could to advance the causes of his Master. In the last hours of his life he prayed for the unsaved world. He died singing hymns of praise to his Master. Mr. Wright was a loving husband, father and brother, and an upright citizen. The family have the sympathy of the entire community in their bereavement.

A Brief History of Shrouds and Stuff

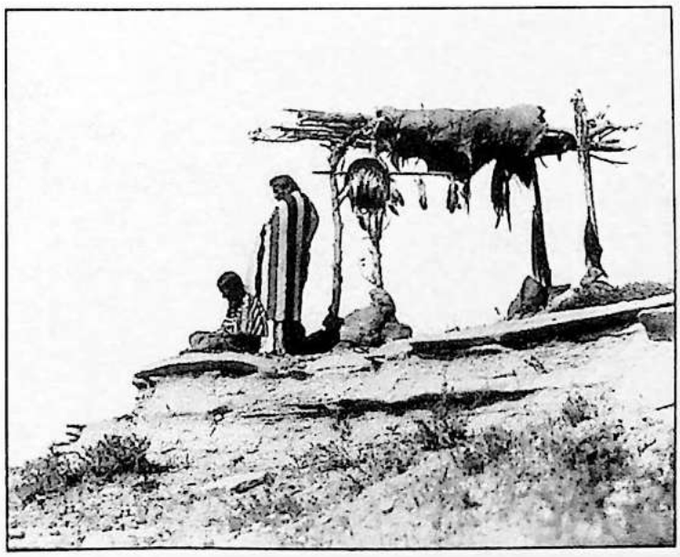
By Esmerelda Rent



A Shroud is any covering wrapped around a corpse for protection, utility and/or Spiritual reverence in preparation for burial, mummification or cremation. Traditionally a shroud is an animal skin or piece of cloth. (Shown: *The Shroud of Turin is believed by many to be the actual shroud of Jesus the Christ.*)

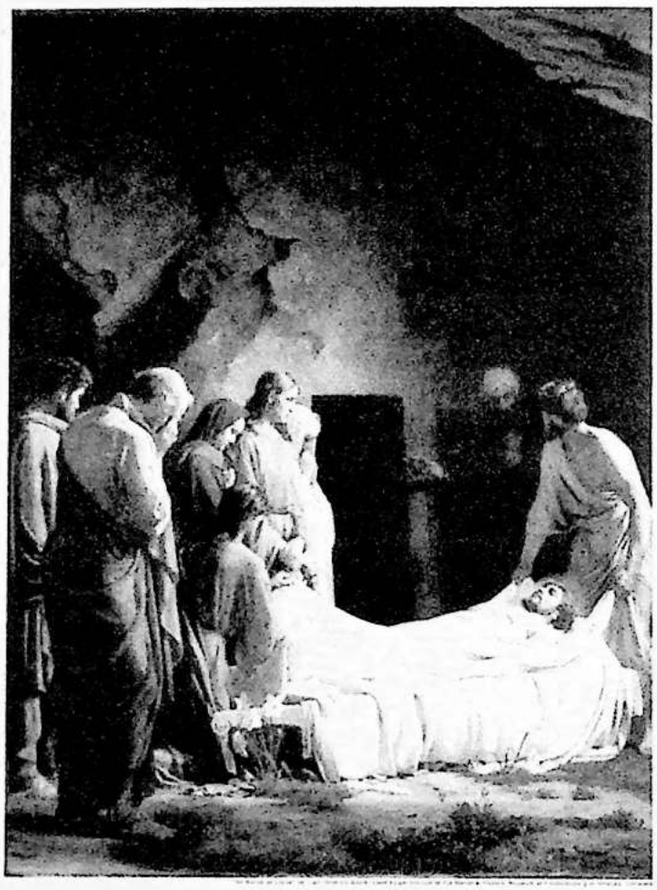
SHROUDS THROUGHOUT HISTORY-PRE-HISTORIC INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

The shroud was perhaps the very first funeral "product" when an early human being



wrapped the deceased body of a loved one in an animal skin. In Native American culture, when a tribal member died the body of the dead was wrapped in hides and placed on a burial platform with their most prized possessions and given back to the Great Spirit. The bones were then buried in the sacred tribal burial grounds. First peoples did NOT cremate. These same burial platforms were used all across the globe by the Aboriginals in Australia practicing the same type of ritual, shrouding the body with animal skins and wrapping it with herbs and flowers.

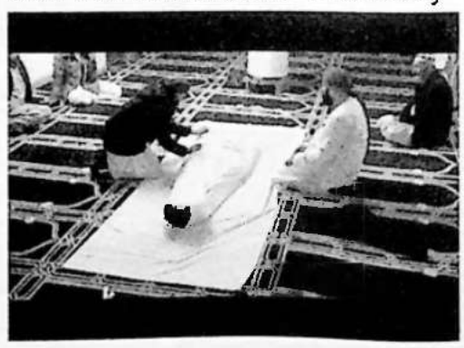
JESUS of NAZARETH, the Christ (founding martyr of the Christian religion) was Jewish and prepared in the Jewish tradition in a shroud:



"It was Preparation Day ... So as evening approached, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pontius Pilate and asked for Jesus' body ... With, Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes...Taking Jesus' body, they wrapped it with the spices in linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs." (John 19:38-42.) "Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. Because it was the Jewish Day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away." (Matthew 27:59,60; John 19:38-42.)

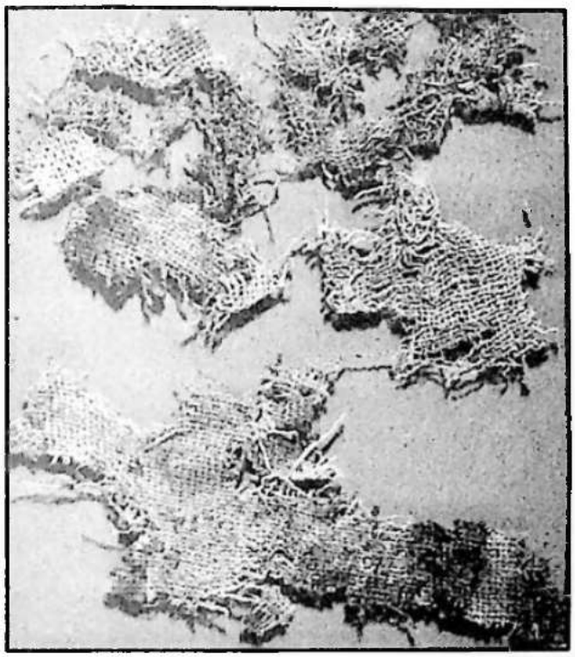
MUSLIM-GHUSL SHROUDING

Islam has a very clear set of protocols for dealing with the deceased. The body must be placed on its sides and washed with warm water and soap with the final washing having scented floral water made of roses or neroli. There must be an odd number of washings (a trend against odd numbers is also visible in the Hindu faith), some of the stomach's contents must be pushed out, and the teeth and nose must be cleaned on the outside as a form of ablution (spiritual cleansing). Then the body is dried, perfumed, and wrapped in a white cloth SHROUD. Burial prayers are then said facing Mecca before a silent procession takes the corpse to its burial, where all the attendants share in filling the grave with soil and a second pit with bricks while saying additional prayers. The body is to be buried soon after the prayer. The wrapped body is to be laid



directly at the bottom of the dug grave on its right side facing the direction of Makkah. A ceiling is attached to the grave and then covered with dirt. A stone may be used to mark the location of the grave, but no writings are allowed. Buildings or other forms of structures are not allowed on top of the grave. Charity, fasting, prayers, and pilgrimage is often performed on behalf of the dead.

EARLY EUROPEAN (SCANDINAVIAN) TEXTILES USED FOR SHROUDS



SCANDINAVIA -"Since the Stone Age, they had very well-developed agriculture and technology for producing linen textiles and textiles made of wild plants such as Nettles. The soft and shiny fabric of wild Nettles dates back to between 940 B.C. and 750 B.C., making it about 2,800 years old. The fabric was wrapped around a bundle of cremated remains and put into a bronze urn. It was a luxurious piece of material, fibers we get from the Northern European nettle are very, very fine and soft and shiny, and we often say this is a sort of prehistoric silk textile - (Silk is normally made from insect cocoons and is known for its shimmery texture.) "

CREMATION SHROUDS

Shrouds have been used in the Far East for centuries by the Jain, Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists in the process of cremation. In India, (as well as Indonesia and many other Asian countries), cremation takes place outdoors in ghats or Charnal Grounds on the banks of the Holy Ganges River in Varanasi, Benares. They burn around the clock - 24hrs a day. Shrouds made of colorful silks are covered with flowers and burning incense. The belief in reincarnation in these religions provides the basis for its funeral rituals. The body must be garbed with a new shroud. Flowers, incense and rose water enhance the bier. Priests, or Brahmans, chant ritual forms, called MANTRAS, along with the family, and ritual offerings of rice and milk are made to the Brahmans. Soon the body is removed to the cremation grounds, usually on the banks of a river. The ashes are collected and deposited in one of India's holy rivers. For the next 10 days, family members are considered ritually

impure and normally remain in the home. By the end of that time, the soul of the deceased is believed to have acquired a new body, and the consequences of the last life, its rewards and punishments, are unfolded.

Esmerelda Rent was a pioneer in introducing the concept of ancient shrouding into the secular American funeral industry and producing and selling modern shrouds.

History of the Coroner

The coroner is a judicial office uniquely styled to English origin, which later migrated to areas of the world influenced by England. The first coroner appeared in England in 925, when a grant for the coroner's office was given by King Athelstan. Formalized in 1194, three knights and one clerk were elected by the knights and freeholders in every county as keepers of the pleas of the crown. These crown representatives, later called crowners, eventually answered to the name of coroner. There being no income tax in 12th Century England, the crown derived substantial income from crime and death, and charged coroners with collecting these funds when sheriffs (shire + reeve = county revenue officer) were relieved of these duties in 1194 due to corruption. Coroners were unpaid and unpopular. Fines were levied upon non-performing coroners and their land could be seized if they failed to deliver revenues to the crown. [342]

Early English coroners were primarily responsible for collecting three types of revenue connected with deaths. The "first finder" of a dead body was required to summon the coroner. Lex murdrorum (murder) taxes were a product of the Norman invasion. Local lords were taxed for not maintaining sufficient order in the killing of those of Norman descent by the English. The lords generally passed the cost of this tax on to the community. One of the duties of the coroner was to establish the "Englishry" of the killer and the victim to determine the amount of the murdrorum tax, if any. The murdrorum tax was repealed in 1340. Also, the coroner was required to convene a coroner's jury to determine the "deodand," or forfeiture amount in death cases. The forfeiture by deodand which was eliminated in 1846, gave over to the crown the instrument that caused death. If a victim was pushed into a water-well and killed, the jury would determine the value of the well as the forfeiture amount. Juries had considerable leeway in these decisions, such as determining the deodand as being an entire horse team and wagon or the single wagon wheel that ran over a decedent. The last type of revenue involved the fining of a community if a murder was committed during the day and a hue and cry was not sent up in time for the murderer to be apprehended. Since murderers could readily escape at night, many coroners' juries found that a murder occurred during hours of darkness so that the community would not be liable for the fine (or they could move the body to a neighboring community).

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[342] Deadly Conflicts, Conflicts of Interest In Death Investigation Systems, (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.funeralethics.org/coroners.htm

Upon creation of the Office of Justice of the Peace in the late 13th century, the Office of Coroner declined in importance as its duties became narrower and office holders were of more questionable character. One of the most persistent and questionable elements of this system that persists to this day is the notion that the cause of death (medical reason - heart attack, stab wound, etc.) and the manner of death (judicial reason - homicide, suicide, accident, natural) may be determined solely by an external examination of the body of the decedent, an examination of the scene of death, and interviews of persons involved. Near the end of the 15th century, some measures were taken to pay coroners for their services, but unless obvious outside signs of wounds were noted on the body of a deceased person, magistrates refused payment and accused coroners of conducting frivolous inquiries merely to gain income.[343]

Great Britain's influence around the world was substantial and it brought the coroner system to many distant lands including the United States of America.

[343] Deadly Conflicts, Conflicts of Interest In Death Investigation Systems, (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.funeralethics.org/coroners.htm

Gone but Not Forgotten

by Doris Brelowski

Researched by Doris Brelowski and Nancy Honssinger

A Little Time on Earth He Spent
Till God for Him His Angel Sent

This verse chipped out years ago by untrained hands on a limestone head marker in a country graveyard seems to express the Ozark people's acceptance of the shortness of life and its natural end. It states simply the strength of their Christian belief in God's concern for each and his plan for a better life.

This philosophy was evident in all the people we talked with about death and burial customs. They spoke of their own experiences and those told them by their parents from as far back as the Civil War to the early 1940s when most people used the services of hospitals and funeral homes.

When death occurred, there were a number of things which were done in a very different way from today, but they all agreed that death used to be taken more naturally as part of the life cycle. Children then were not excluded from the funeral activities and were taught a more natural approach to death. People did not hesitate to show their emotions, and the neighbors always showed their concern by helping the family in many ways.

Sickness

In the late 1800s and early 1900s a larger number of infants and young children died because medicine was not as advanced, because hygiene conditions were often poor, especially in the remote hills and rural areas, and because there were not many doctors. Many people could not afford them, anyway. Childhood diseases such as measles or chicken pox could be fatal then. Common causes of death for adults were pneumonia, typhoid fever and ruptured appendix, which the people called "dread colic." Childbirth was often fatal for both mother and child.

A visit in any cemetery shows rows of little markers inscribed with dates of death one or two years apart of children in the family who lived only a few days or years--often followed closely by a bigger stone for the mother.

Families experienced death often. The death occurred in the home, usually from

sickness, since before the automobile there were not as many sudden, accidental deaths as now. The family and close neighbors handled all the details of sickness, death, preparation for burial, the funeral and the burial. Death's reality could not be avoided or lessened by removing the dying person to hospitals and funeral homes.

Charlie McMicken told us,

"If a person became real sick, a doctor would be called. Around the turn of the century, a doctor was expected to make house calls at any time, day or night, 365 days a year and to any place within driving distance with a horse and buggy. There were a few automobiles at that time, but roads were so poor that they weren't used much out in the country." If a person was very sick, the doctor might stay several hours.

Mary Moore remembered being called one winter in the night to help with a lady that died.

"You know, people then wasn't able much to get to doctors. And maybe they'd have a doctor today and maybe it'd be a week before they had a doctor anymore. They didn't have no money. They couldn't have a doctor."

If someone were very sick or died, the news spread fast. In the early 1900s there were country telephone lines--party lines. There were ten to fifteen neighbors on a line. When anyone called, everyone on the line heard the ring and listened. Charlie McMicken remembered, *"If the phone rang of a night, believe me, everyone was up and listening to find out who was sick, because we knew it was sickness if someone rang the one long ring for the operator at night. It wasn't being nosey. Most considered it their obligation to know so they could help."*

No matter in what manner they received the news, neighbors would come to help the family take care of the ill and to stand by in case of death. The neighbors and friends would take turns sitting up with the sick at night and helping give medicines. It was desirable, if possible, for a near relative to be present at time of death. When death occurred and there wasn't enough help, they would go get someone else.

Death

Relatives who lived away were notified of the death by letters. Sometimes people sent the news in a black edged envelope. The postmaster would know that it contained news of a death and immediately sent someone with the letter to the home.

When somebody died, the neighbors brought in food. Dorothy McMicken said,

"*Neighbors were nice to the people. They wanted to do things. The women*

cooked for the family to relieve them of the burden of the daily chores which at a time like that were too heavy."

Neighbors who weren't needed to be there sent in food or did anything they could to help. Myrtle Hough remembered,

"They come as quick as they can get there. They all gather in, bring food and do anything they can. I know when my father died--we didn't have heated rooms then--a neighbor came early morning a little after daylight, and he cut wood nearly till noon for heating purposes. They'd come to work for you and do all the chores."

Today death and caring for the dead seems to be remote or divorced from the family life with death occurring in hospitals and the dead cared for by professionals. Ella Hough said,

"You shouldn't have to die alone. Folks should be with their family when they die and they should see death. You don't even see your folks die now, everything's changed so. Being together brings the family closer."

Most rural people in the Ozarks did not use the services of undertakers and embalming until cars came in. Before that there were no undertakers to be had. Even buying a casket meant a long trip to town and back.

When the automobile became common in the early 1920s some people began to have their dead embalmed. However, it wasn't unusual even in the thirties for people to be buried without embalming.

In the small towns undertakers started doing well in the 1930's. Earlier than that they were often associated with furniture stores. The first use of embalming in the rural areas of the Ozarks was someone bringing the equipment to the home and caring for the body there. Sometimes these men were connected to a funeral home, but often they were not. Helen Beard recalled a man who embalmed a lot.

"You just called him and he came to the home. He came into the bedroom and was practically all day --eight to ten hours--embalming. He worked by himself and he really would do a good job."

In the thirties when the funeral parlors took this function over, they discouraged trips to the home for it was obviously more efficient to do it in their laboratories. By then there was adequate transportation, and more money, so bodies were taken to the funeral parlors to be embalmed then returned to the home to lie in state.

Before this service was available, the neighbors did what was necessary. Since it

was a necessity, there was always someone in the neighborhood with experience who could be called on to care for the body.

Since the body would not keep long, especially in the summers, the funeral was often the next day. If not treated, bodies can't be held very long for they begin to turn black and mortification sets in; therefore, they were buried as soon as it was possible to dig the grave and make the coffin.

If it was possible to keep the body that long, some people waited to the third day. That was the time Jesus was in the grave and they wanted to wait that same period of time.

Preparations for Burial

As soon as possible after death, the body would be prepared, or laid out. Women would lay out women and men lay out men. The first thing was to clean out the room where the death occurred--take out all the bedding. It had to be washed or burned. Helen Beard said,

> *"They hardly ever let anyone else use it. Usually they burned the ticks for they were made of straw or shucks. They would get some boards put across chair backs or propped up in some other way. The furniture would be rearranged to make that possible. That might mean taking out the bed entirely."*

Since in some one or two room homes this was not possible, the living and the dead shared the room until burial.

Those preparing the body started with taking off the nightgown and washing the body from head to toe with soap and water. In death the kidneys and bowels would relax so a sheet was wrapped around like a diaper.

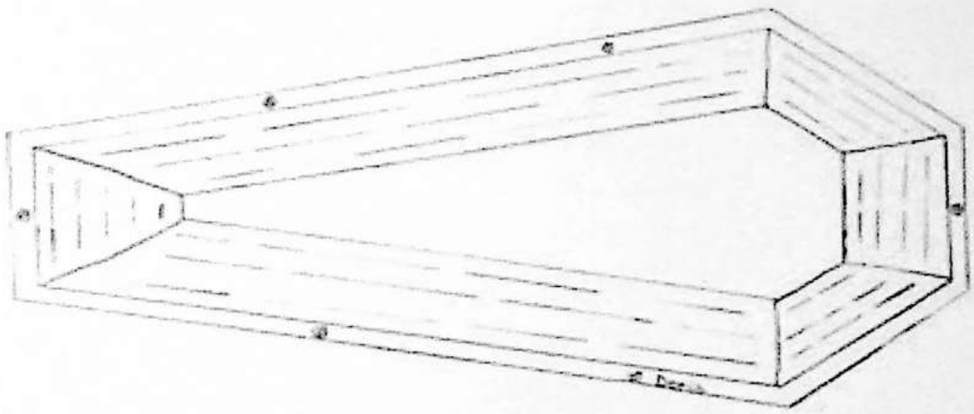
Something was put on the eyes to keep them closed, usually quarters which were often kept by the family as keepsakes. It is an old, but false belief that a person's eyes can be closed just after he has died and they will stay. They must be held closed until the body is cold. A cloth had to be tied around the chin and up over the top of the head to hold the mouth until the body was cold and set.

Then the body could be dressed. Some older people had their burying clothes laid back. Usually the best dress or suit would be put on. If there wasn't anything suitable, sometimes neighbor women would quickly make a dress. As long as the clothes were clean, they did not have to be new.

The women had panties, an undershirt, a chemise (pronounced chimmy) and a petticoat, then the dress and stockings. Older people often wanted shoes or house

slippers on, but that was usually what the family preferred. Men had underwear, shirt, tie and suit. Then the hair was washed and combed the way they wore it. Make up was not used until bodies were embalmed.

Some families left jewelry like rings on their dead. We also heard several times about ladies who had a hat or a cap laid back especially for their burials and cases where favorite belongings like a scrapbook and violin were placed in the casket with their owner.



Most coffins used in the Ozarks in the early twentieth century were homemade. Besides the rectangular shape, many were made pointed or shaped like the body.

After dressing the person, he was laid out on the cooling board, a sufficiently long board which was laid on the backs of a couple of chairs and covered with a white sheet. The body was also completely covered with a white sheet. In some cases a pillow was put under the head, but people were generally not supposed to do it because the pillow prevented the body from cooling out as fast.

Wet soda cloths were put on the face and hands to help preserve the skin color and texture. The people who sat up with the body would wring cloths out every so often to put on the face. These cloths were kept in place except when someone was viewing the body.

After the body cooled out, it was placed in the coffin, covered with a sheet and lay in state until the funeral.

While some neighbors were busy preparing the body, others came in to cook or bring in food. The women made coffee and helped the family in any way possible. Others just came in to view the body in the darkened room. In those days, many people did not hesitate to show their emotions. They would cry and moan aloud, fall to their knees and pray aloud.

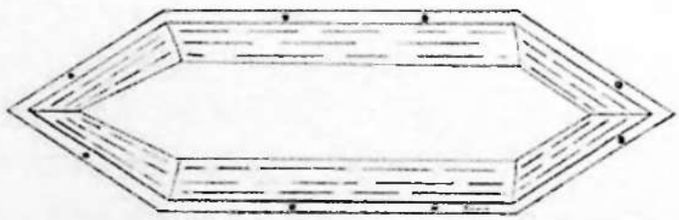
The house was often crowded with people being ready to help, coming in to sympathize with the family or to view the dead. The children were not excluded from this. They usually played around just as normal, but were calmed down if they became too noisy.

Meanwhile someone had to attend to making the coffin or buying a casket, as it was called if purchased from a store. In most cases the coffin was homemade. They varied from a simple pine or rough oak box to beautifully fine-crafted walnut coffins lined with black satin cloth for older people or white for a child or young person up to the twenties. They did not have colors then. The sides sometimes had cotton fill and were decorated with rows of eyelet embroidery or lace.

The size of the coffins depended on the body measurements of the dead, but was three feet high. They would have a lid that could be closed with screws when ready to be put into the ground. They came in different shapes from rectangular to those shaped wide at the shoulders and narrow at the head and feet.

Those who could afford it would send a near relative to town to pick out a casket. For most funerals all the undertaker got out of a funeral was a chance to sell the casket. Only the well-to-do people had the undertaker to lay out the dead or furnish a hearse.

People tried to wait for far away relatives to arrive, but in the summertime the funeral had to be no later than the second day after the death. Only if the weather was cold enough, the body could be kept up to three days.



The neighbors also began digging the grave as soon as possible because the body could usually not be kept very long. Sometimes if there was a church near the graveyard, the digging tools might be stored there, but usually,

> *"The neighbors would just gather their picks and shovels and just go to the graveyard,"* Elva Hough said. *"We'd measure off our grave, what we had to have, and take turnabout. One would get in there and dig him up a patch of dirt and another'd get in and throw it out. And we just kept that up until we got down where we wanted. We've done that until just the last five years or so around here."*

The grave was six feet long, four feet wide and six feet deep. The men would

usually leave something to do for the day of the funeral, even if it were just removing a few final shovelfuls.

It did not matter how bad the weather was, the neighbors dug the grave even if it rained, snowed or the ground was frozen. If the ground was frozen or there were lots of rock, the men sometimes dynamited. Since the soil in the Ozarks is so thin and the hard pan and rock layers are close to the surface, some graves are especially hard to dig. We heard cases of dynamiting going on while the funeral service was in progress.

Sometimes a person had expressed the wish to be buried on his or her own farm, in which case the neighbors dug the grave right by the house, garden or wherever the dead had wanted it.

In the meantime, other neighbors sat up with the dead.

"This meant that someone stayed with the body all the time, usually a group of three to six people. It was done out of respect to the dead. The relatives were not expected to sit up. They were worn out. There had been sickness and death. They were supposed to go to bed to sleep," Charlie McMicken explained.

Neighbors provided plenty of food and coffee for those who sat up. At least one person had to be awake all the time while the others might doze off in their chairs during the night. But the light was never blown out. Different neighbors would relieve them in the morning.

The pets, especially cats, were usually kept out of the house during this time, because of the fear that they might try to harm the body.

The home where there was a death was very busy--neighbors coming and going to help, view the body, visit and mourn with the family, relatives arriving, cooking of food and making coffee, and children playing around in all this activity. It was a sad occasion to meet, but especially the kids enjoyed seeing one another and had a good time. For the adults it was also an occasion when they had the chance to see one another once again renewing family bonds.

"The atmosphere in the home after a death was not like at a funeral home now," "I think there was a deeper feeling between the people then. Your neighbors were close to you, and they were the ones that came and stayed by you. That in my opinion created a deeper feeling than there is now in a funeral home where anybody can come. In my case we knew some of the neighbors were elderly, and they made a special effort to come for the love of being with us, and it seemed to me that there was a closer feeling there than in a funeral home." Dorothy McMicken said.

Myrtle Hough prefers the way we use funeral homes now.

"I think it's much better," she said. *"It's better for the family all the way around. You don't have the memories. They look so much nicer now. Just take you and me and somebody else, we wouldn't really know what to do except to dress and wash them. I think it's better for the family to have the dead person away so you can come home to relax. It's an awful trial on a family if you had to see that the meals were there and your house was crowded."*

The Funeral

On the day of the funeral, or the burying, the neighbors served a big dinner for all the relatives. This is still the custom. All who were related within reach would come to the house before noon, for most funerals were at two o'clock. If the funeral was at the home, a good half hour before time, everyone would gather in the yard, or go to the church, enter and sit quietly until the family arrived. It did not matter how busy anyone was, even if putting up hay or planting corn, everyone went as Myrtle said,

"Busy season or not. I can't ever remember that it got too busy that everyone didn't go to a funeral. It's nearly that way in this neighborhood now. And years ago, a number of people walked, including the children."

Lenora West remembers when she was in school how her teachers taught respect and correct behavior.

"When we went to school they'd teach us how to respect the dead. They'd take us to the church and we'd have to sit real still. They'd let school out. We'd walk down to Hough [Chapel] when they'd have a funeral. We'd have a lecture on how to respect the dead and the parents and people. We didn't think about it. When our teachers talked to us, it was just natural and we had to have respect and take responsibility. We'd all march to the church and we minded. We didn't get out of line."

On the day of the funeral people wore their Sunday dresses and suits. The school children who sometimes served as a choir, especially where the church and school were close, just had their regular school clothes on. The members of the family wore dark, mostly black clothes. If a husband or wife had died and the one left did not have black clothes, some neighbors would sew them in the last hours or find suitable clothes for them. It used to be the custom for everyone attending to wear black. Each lady that could, had a black dress just to wear to funerals.

The women in the family that could afford it wore a black hat and veil to the funeral. The veils were square black pieces of material that went over the head so that

you could not see the face.

Many funerals were held in the homes if the church wasn't near enough because of the transportation problems. Most would go to a church if they could. A home funeral was usually simpler than one at the church. The atmosphere was more informal, also. The yard was crowded with neighbors who had not found a place in the house. The choir or singers had to get along without music and used a tuning fork to get the pitch.

If the funeral was at a church, the coffin with the body in it would be shut and screwed down, loaded on a hack or wagon by six pallbearers and pulled to the church by horses or mules. The more wealthy people nearer the towns sometimes had funeral directors with hearses pulled by horses. The horses were black with black plumes or other decorations on them.

The opened coffin would be placed in the front of the church usually just under the altar. The family would file in to sit on the first rows of benches and the services would begin.

If there was a preacher, the order would be quite similar to that used today. If there was no preacher, someone in the community would do his part. Helen Beard said,

> *"There was always a man or woman, in the community that could substitute with a prayer. If you couldn't find the minister, a lot of times there were circuit riders. If you couldn't get them in time, you'd always know there was a man or woman, usually a man that could step up and do that."*

The time for a funeral was usually two o'clock. The order often went as follows: song, scripture, song, obituary, sermon, prayer, viewing the body, family remain for last goodbyes, go to cemetery, prayer, interment, family stay and visit.

The songs were sung either by the regular church choir, special groups or individuals. Ashford Hough who has sung in many funerals told us he used to sing some duets but mostly quartets. In the early years which he remembers the singers sang at a lot of home funerals.

Occasionally the obituary was brief, like most are today, with just the dates when the person had been born and when he died, if he had been converted and when --just facts. But mostly the obituary was much longer and more personal than it is now. It used to tell about the parents, marriage and children, when the person had joined the church, the survivors and the age in years, months and days with some interesting comments on his life--a complete life history.

Those writing the obituary always wanted to say something good about the dead person. Georgia Massey used to tell the story,

"There was one man who was so mean and hateful the preacher was hard put to it to think of anything good. He came to that part of the obituary and stopped. In a minute he brightened up and said, 'He's got the best set of teeth I ever saw.'"

The sermon was also usually longer than it is now, and it was very often addressed directly to the congregation.

"The country ministers weren't educated then. They just preached fire and brimstone. They would get wild at the funerals back at those times. It wasn't dignified like it is now and rather reserved. They preached! I've seen one preacher pound and run back and forth and then come up and pound on the casket. They just kind of whooped it up."

This kind of sermon would create reactions in the congregation who probably then were not as reserved as they are today. Some people would kick and wail. Others would cry loud to show sympathy.

The purpose of the service, of course, was and is to help the bereaved. Those who expressed themselves in this way were getting a sort of therapy. Of course, not all preachers behaved in this manner, but tried to help the living understand life and death using other preaching methods.

The Burial

The coffin was closed for the final time; the lid was fastened with screws to the sides and loaded on the wagon again if the graveyard was any distance away. Many times, it was beside the church in which case the pallbearers would carry it to the open grave.

The family followed right behind the coffin; behind them came the relatives and friends and neighbors who would all stay for interment. At the grave the people would gather around while someone spoke a prayer and the coffin was lowered.

Four men, two on each side, would slip ropes or harness lines underneath the coffin and slowly lower the coffin into a wooden box which was already in the grave. The lines were of thin leather and could be pulled out from underneath the lowered coffin quite easily. Someone would jump inside the grave to nail the lid on the outside box which acted as a vault. Then the preacher would do his "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" routine and throw some dirt on top of the casket.

After this the men would fill the grave up with dirt. Sometimes while the casket was lowered or the grave was being filled there would be more singing. While the grave was being filled, everyone visited and sympathized with the family.

If there were any flowers on the grave at all, they were wild, fresh picked ones and not very many of them. Later some people made homemade crepe paper flowers to put on the grave to keep it from looking so cold and gray, but florist flowers were never bought until recent years.

On top of the grave came a marker of some kind. Sometimes it was nothing more than a wooden cross with the name and maybe birthdate and date of death on it. Some families found a rock on which they crudely carved out the information. Others put headstones on the grave, square or rectangular upright pieces of limestone which also had names and dates inscribed on them. Some fancy ones had a little poem or line from the Bible.

Everyone would visit with the family until the grave was finished. Then each went home or back to his business. Some neighbor women sometimes returned to the house to help straighten up, and the relatives who lived very far away would probably stay another night or two.

The cost of a funeral was very low compared to the cost today. The only expense was the coffin, which might have been around $25 including the satin lining, if made by a local handyman. The burial plots did not cost anything, for people used spaces available in the community graveyards. Undertakers and embalming were seldom used.

The Aftermath

After having done what they could, everyone continued their interrupted work, but for the widow or widower, it was quite a different story. Especially the widow often faced a very difficult situation. Unless she had relatives to support her and her children, she had to run the farm alone, or look for work, which was very hard to find in the country where everybody else just barely made a living on their farms. Women rarely had any education or training for a regular job in town. With little children and a farm, she survived hard when she survived.

A widower left with little children also had a hard time unless he had a female relative who could come into the home to help.

The widow was almost isolated from society. She was supposed to wear black clothes for a year after the death when in public, and she could not attend any "questionable" events, such as dances, social meetings, plays or shows in town. About the only place she could go was to church. Her moral standards would be questioned if she remarried before the mourning year was over. But if she had several small children and was in desperate financial situation, it might be considered a blessing when she remarried before that because it might mean survival for her. However, most people would not object if a widower remarried after about half a year.

One way or another, life goes on after a death. For the people in the Ozarks, their faith in God and their overall very religious attitude toward life often helped them more than anything else, to find the way back to a normal life. This was God's will, and therefore, it was nature's way--to give life and to take it away. People accepted death, for they could not change it and they believed God knew best.

We would like to thank the following for sharing their memories with us: Mary Moore, Dorothy and Charlie McMicken, Ella and Ashford Hough, Myrtle and Elva Hough, Lois Beard, Hazel and Lavern Cravens, Lenora West and Helen Beard.

Sincerest thanks given to Dr. Ruth Massey for permission to reprint parts of the article *Bittersweet Volume III; No 1; 1975.* Springfield Green County Library.

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Overachieving Undertakers – How Funeral Director Inventors Changed History

Originally posted in the August 2015 issue of
American Funeral Director Magazine.

Like many inventions and innovations throughout history, the funeral profession was created in response to a societal need. The first undertakers were fulfilling an essential role that became necessary during the Civil War. As the death toll rose, skilled tradesman who often worked under the title, "**Furniture Maker** and **Undertaker**" were called upon to transport our nation's fallen back to their homes for burial. While they may not have fully realized it at the time, these dedicated servants can be credited with inventing the funeral profession. Both literally and figuratively, they laid the groundwork.

Since the birth of the funeral profession, ideas from directors have influenced our culture's traditions and behaviors. From the invention of embalming fluid in the 1800s to the recent creation of biodegradable urns and burial pods, morticians throughout history have shaped end-of-life rituals through innovation. They have also contributed tremendously to advancements in communication, transportation and other industries. Today, those working in funeral service continue to drive progress with new inventions, products and services.

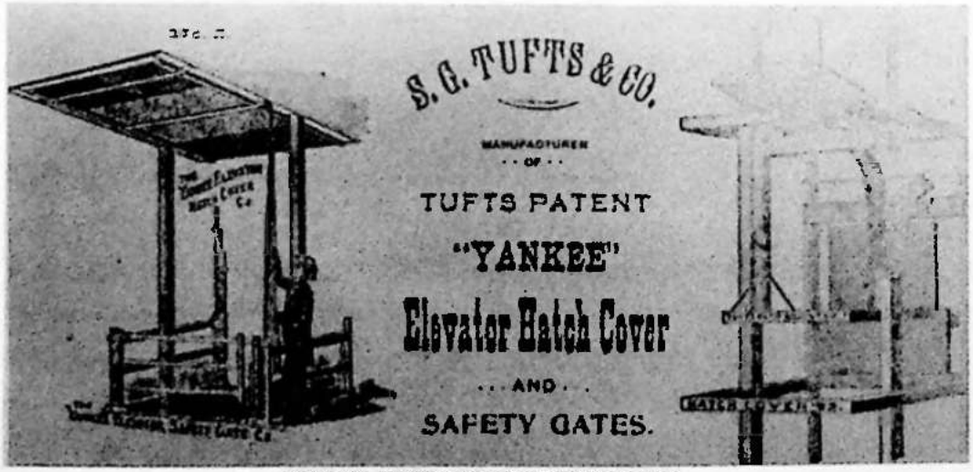
Inventions that Improved Society

To work in funeral service, funeral professionals must be prepared for unexpected problems. The short window of time to plan a service coupled with the heightened emotions of families requires directors to adapt quickly. For this reason, most funeral professionals are critical thinkers capable of resolving complicated dilemmas quickly. These problem-solving skills have led morticians to make groundbreaking discoveries while searching for a solution to a common issue.

During the 19th Century, funeral parlors evolved from furniture, ambulance and wagon companies. In 1840, a gentleman named Seth G. Tufts found success in Ohio by establishing a carriage and wagon-making business. Tufts was also the town's undertaker and after the Cholera pandemic of 1850, he was asked to build coffins for the deceased. By 1869, Tufts had turned his undertaking business over to his son in order to focus on what he loved doing most – inventing. During his lifetime, he filed several patents that helped improve processes for numerous businesses.

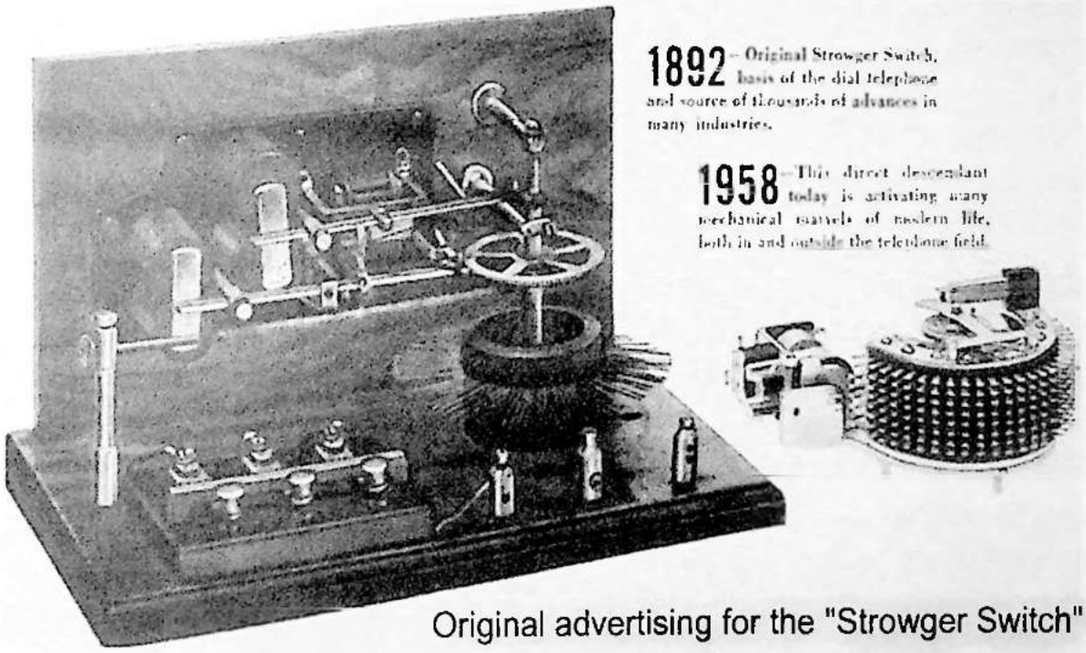
Seth G. Tufts' "undertaker chair."
Photo courtesy of Tufts Schildmeyer Funeral Home

Tufts most notable achievement was the **"Undertaker's Chair"** which was the first foldable chair in existence. One can imagine how difficult setting up for a service must have been for directors prior to Tufts' invention. It allowed for chairs to be easily moved and stowed, making events like weddings, graduations and parties as well as funerals much easier. Tufts' creativity was not limited to one invention or industry. He also created a portable fire escape, a portable fence, a safety hatch cover for elevators and an adjustable roof system for collecting water from cisterns. His legacy lives on today both in the advancements he brought to fruition and in the heritage of the funeral home he founded. Today, the Tufts Schildmeyer Funeral Home remains family owned with three locations in Blanchester, Goshen and Loveland, OH. The funeral home will celebrate its 175th Anniversary this year.



Seth G. Tuft's elevator hatch cover
(Photo courtesy of Tufts Schildmeyer Funeral Home)

Tufts wasn't the only undertaker of his time making waves with innovative ideas. In 1891, Funeral Director, Almon Strowger, earned his place in history with a revolutionary new invention. Strowger was a mortician working in Kansas City who transformed telecommunications with the first telephone exchange system and direct dial phone. Known as the "Strowger Switch", this invention allowed phone calls to be directly connected without the need for a switchboard operator. Early advertising dubbed this new technology as "*the girl-less, cuss-less, out-of-order-less, wait-less telephone.*" In 1958, over 65 years after it was introduced, Automatic Electric Company affirmed, *"The principals which this device pioneered are the root of all automation today."*


1892 – Original Strowger Switch, basis of the dial telephone and source of thousands of advances in many industries.
1958 – This direct descendant today is activating many mechanical marvels of modern life, both in and outside the telephone field.

Original advertising for the "Strowger Switch"

Although his invention modernized communication, Strowger originally set out to resolve a simple problem he was experiencing running his funeral business. Allegedly, his competitor's wife worked as an operator at the local telephone exchange and was rerouting all of Strowger's calls to her husband's funeral home instead. Rather than continuing to lose business, Strowger aspired to create a solution that would prevent this from ever happening to him or another business owner again. His device remained in use for nearly 100 years and is considered to be one of the greatest landmarks in the history of modern telephones.

By the year 1912, approximately one million patents had been filed in the United States. However, large portions of the population were not afforded the same opportunities to bring their inventions to the marketplace. In 1923, Funeral Director, Richard Stone, established the first African-American Funeral Home in the Cocoa, FL

area. In 1935, Stone awoke from a dream with the idea of building the first automobile turn signal. He used a coffee percolator to make a prototype and filed for a patent. Unfortunately, Stone lived during a time when credibility was defined by skin color and he was never able to find a manufacturer willing to produce his invention.

"Others soon copied enough of Richard Stone's turn signal and implemented just enough changes to file for different patents and make all the money," wrote author Bob Harvey in his book, *Cocoa, Florida: A History*. "Nevertheless, Richard Stone of Cocoa, Florida invented the automobile turn signal."

Although he never received the credit or profit he deserved, Stone's idea did a great deal to improve driving safety. Like Stone, Ronald Docie of Athens County, Ohio was a funeral director who wanted to reduce the number of automobile accidents. In 1975, Docie was driving a hearse for Schoedinger Funeral Homes and almost got into an accident due to another vehicle entering his blind spot. Only 20 years old at the time, Docie began to brainstorm a way to create a blind spot mirror that would prevent incidents like this. He spent years commercializing his invention, eventually selling it as the Docie Wedge Blindspot Mirror in Kmart, Wal-Mart and other automotive outlets.

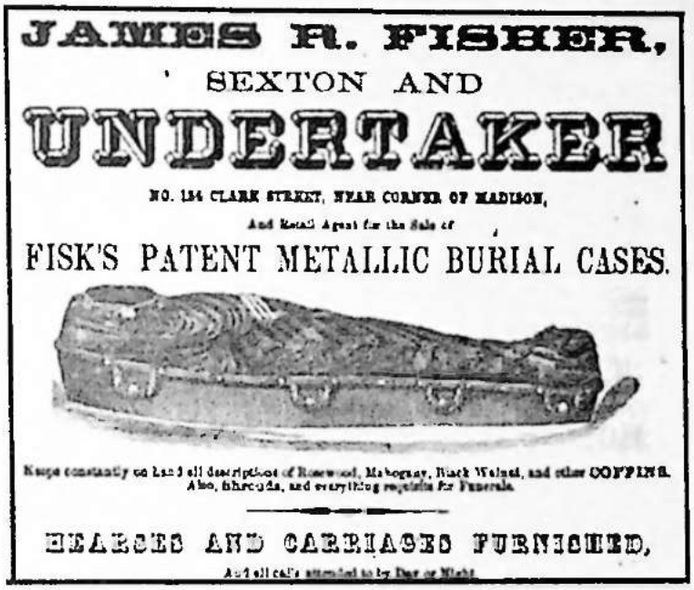
Today, Ronald Docie is considered a leading expert in bringing new inventions to market. He has provided consultation to help entrepreneurs patent and sell their ideas. He has also advocated on behalf of independent inventors during U.S. Congressional meetings. Docie's book, *The Inventor's Bible* is considered to be a definitive guidebook for introducing a new product or service. His influence on entrepreneurs over the past 30 years has helped shape many brilliant ideas into successful businesses. Although Docie's experience as a funeral director was brief, it no doubt had a lasting impact on his success. How inspiring to think the catalyst for all of that progress began as clever idea inside of a hearse.

Inventions that Created the Funeral Profession

Innovation within the funeral profession can be traced back to the Civil War. As more soldiers died away from home, the need for preservation methods quickly became obvious. Between 1835 and 1900, a number of new discoveries and inventions changed the course of American death rituals. Pioneers like Dr. Thomas Holmes, the first mortician to experiment with embalming in America and Alan Durfee, the first manufacturer of embalming fluid paved the way for future advancements. Due to the war's high death rate, many families also required assistance with transporting deceased loved ones and building coffins. As a result, the casket and hearse industry was born.

The advent of metallic burial cases, first patented by James A. Gray in 1836, led to a shift away from traditional wooden, hexagonal and octagonal-shaped coffins. By

1848, Almond D. Fisk had invented his own airtight, cast-iron burial case which promised better protection from decay and grave robbers.



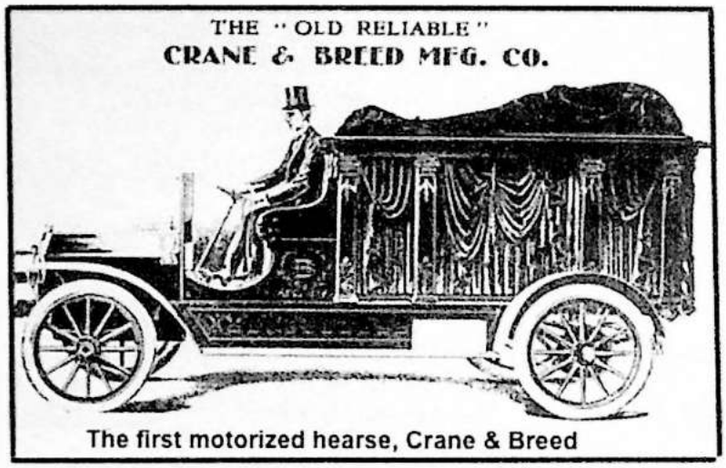
The Fisk burial case was custom formed to the deceased body like an Egyptian sarcophagus. This was a time period when the literal "shape" of funeral service was changing in America. The creation of the first **rectangular casket** by A.C. Barstow in 1849 symbolized an entirely new perspective on death. "Casket" was a term that was formerly used to describe a jewelry box or container for valuables. Barstow's design endorsed the idea that a human body is something precious.

In 1878, Samuel Rodgers patented the "**trocar**" which allowed embalmers to easily administer preservative fluid. This process of embalming was simpler than the arterial embalming practiced at the time. Although embalmers continued to refine their methods into the 20th' century, Rodger's trocar model revolutionized embalming techniques at the time and is very similar to the tool used in mortuaries today.

By the turn of the century, German Physicist, Ferdinand Blum's discovery of formaldehyde as a preservation chemical made embalming possible without the use of toxic chemicals like arsenic and mercury. This finding fostered public acceptance of embalming as an important end-of-life ritual. The ability to preserve the deceased for viewing gave families more time to honor and mourn lost loved ones.

According to Author and Professor, Gary Laderman, an expert on the history of death rituals, "The rapid spread of embalming spurred the equally swift emergence of funeral homes across the country in the first few decades of the twentieth century, as American life was transformed by urbanization, medical advances, and the increasing prevalence of scientific attitudes and perspectives. Undertakers no longer traveled to

the home of the deceased to prepare the body but instead transported corpses from the home or hospital to the funeral home. A mélange of business, residence, religion, and consumerism, the funeral home rapidly became an American institution in local neighborhoods."



The first motorized hearse, Crane & Breed

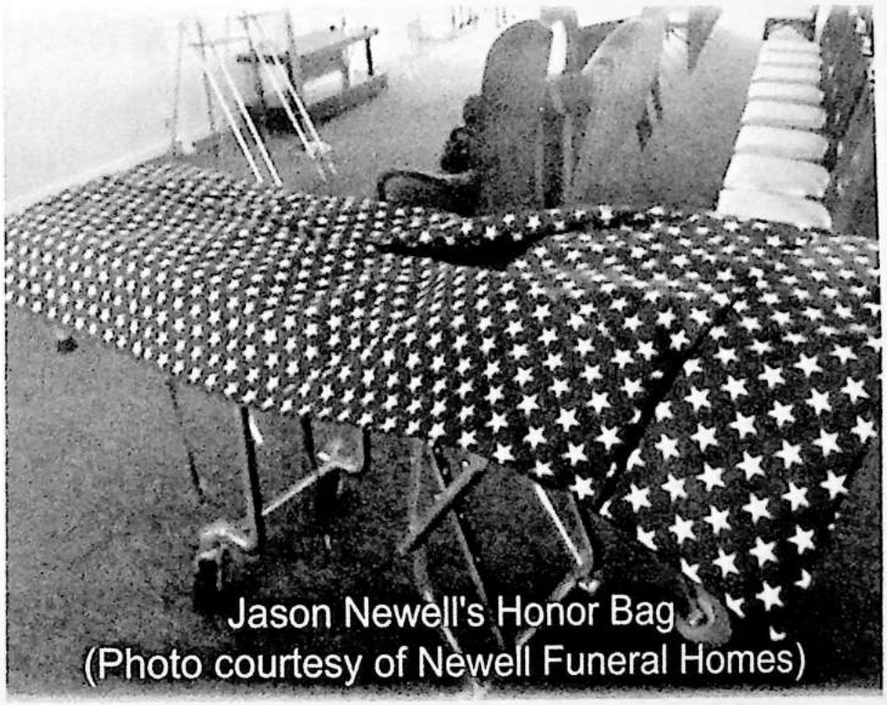
Mass production of caskets and funeral vehicles combined with increased popularity of embalming resulted in funeral homes multiplying across the country. Professional associations, universities and publications were created to support this new industry. The death care profession began to grow more commercialized as high-profile funerals for famous or wealthy individuals caught the attention of the public. Hearses and coffins were often viewed status symbols representing the influence of the departed. As a result, new inventions such as the first motorized hearse were developed to cater to an increasing desire for more extravagant funerals.

Between the Civil War and the early 1900s, new theories and discoveries transformed our society's perspective on death. Embalming techniques, caskets and funeral vehicles have been updated many times over the years with contributions from countless funeral professionals. These forward-thinking pioneers built the foundation of funeral service in America.

Recent Funeral Inventions

The creative spirit of our nation's first undertakers is alive and well in the funeral profession today. A large number of funeral-related companies were established by licensed directors who recognized a void and conceived an original solution. Every year, the National Funeral Directors Association recognizes one of these companies with the *NFDA Innovation Award.* By supporting and encouraging new ideas within the profession, associations like the NFDA have helped preserve the inventive character of early morticians.

One invention that hit the market this year was the brainchild of Funeral Director, Jason Newell, of Newell Funeral Homes in Mt. Vernon, IL. After realizing there were very few dignified options for transporting a body without a casket, Newell set out to find an answer. He imagined the first all-in-one **Honor Bag** which could be used as a cot cover, removal bag, cremation container or burial unit. Newell's idea was born out of a frustrating experience he had when picking up a deceased at a residence. Due to the layout of the home, he could not bring his cart inside the room and had no choice but to transport the deceased in a body bag in front of the family. He decided to invent something that could rectify this issue and serve more than one function. Last year, Newell officially launched Honor LLC at the NFDA convention and demonstrated his patent-pending product for directors in attendance.



Jason Newell's Honor Bag
(Photo courtesy of Newell Funeral Homes)

Many technical advancements also have been introduced to enhance service for families and deliver convenience to funeral professionals. Vendors that work exclusively with funeral homes have created digital signage solutions, funeral webcasting services and slideshow programs. In 2011, the ASD Mobile app was introduced to help funeral homes manage their after-hour communications on the go. Developed in house by ASD – Answering Service for Directors, the app allows funeral homes to listen and read all messages, update their on call, send service details and more. The app includes several mobile tools that were patented by ASD. It was awarded the 2012 NFDA Innovation Award and, with more than 5,000 downloads and 100 five-star reviews, is the highest-rated mobile app within the funeral profession.

Transportation is another area of funeral service that has been enhanced through innovations. From specially designed removal vans to open-top flower cars to custom **motorcycle hearses**, the variety of options available to morticians has increased tremendously. In 2013, Wade Lind, Director of Sunset Hills Cemetery, Funeral Home & Crematorium in Eugene, OR, made national headlines with the first and only **bicycle hearse** in America. The three-wheeled bike is connected to a 7-foot bamboo hearse and uses a small electric motor to help with pedaling. It was created by Lind in response to requests from environmentally-conscious families in his area.

Tomorrow's Inventions

Due to the unpredictable nature of the funeral business, many funeral professionals have the natural ability to recognize a problem and quickly identify a solution. While some morticians have designed, patented and manufactured their inventions, others consult with vendors for insight and suggestions. The lifestyle of a funeral director is often quite hectic making it difficult to set aside time for creative pursuits. Fortunately, there are a great deal of resources to support new inventors.

Funeral professionals interested in receiving education and guidance on patenting and marketing a new invention can contact the United Inventors Association of America, a non-profit that provides support to independent inventors. The UIA can help directors connect with a local chapter in their area. To learn more, visit www.UIAUSA.ORG.

The Jazz Funeral

Though funerals would seem an unlikely source for such a festive tradition, the **jazz funeral** celebrates life at the moment of death – a concept common among many cultures until the twentieth century. In New Orleans and elsewhere, Europeans and Anglo-Americans attended funerals with music that featured a brass band playing "solemn music on the way to the grave and happy music on the return."

There is also a history of rejoicing at death through music in West African burial traditions. The call-and-response style of music and chant, coupled with tambourines, drums, music and dancing were elements of African funeral ceremonies which crossed the seas with captive slaves. In 1819, architect Benjamin Latrob witnessed a continuance of this tradition at a black funeral in New Orleans. The funeral began with the mourners making "loud lamentations" and ended with "noise and laughter."[344] The music and dancing of the jazz funeral were intended to both help the deceased find his way to heaven and to celebrate the final release from the bounds of earthly life, which had in the past, included the release from slavery. With the end of slavery, black funerals with brass bands became commonplace. However, as this tradition was not welcomed by the Catholic Church, it was restricted largely to the black Protestants of New Orleans and came to be the funeral of choice particularly among impoverished people and musicians.[345]

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[344] Funeral Wise: Everything You Need to Know About Funerals: New Orleans Jazz Funeral Customs, (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.funeralwise.com/customs/neworleans/
[345] Ibid.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the funerals had become forums for the performance of a new style of music – jazz, eventually becoming known as jazz funerals. Simultaneously, the popularity of funerals with brass band music waned among white New Orleanians.

Historically, the New Orleans jazz funeral could last up to a week. A typical funeral began with a slow march from the home of the deceased to the church or funeral home. During the march, the coffin was carried by a horse-drawn hearse and was accompanied by a brass band playing somber dirges and hymns. After the service, the march would proceed to the cemetery and the tone would remain somber until the coffin had been placed in the ground or until the group was out of sight of the church.

In the traditional jazz funeral, a prominent member of the community – often a musician and nearly always an African American male – "is buried with music." **Benevolent and burial societies** traditionally arranged these funerals, often offering the services of a brass band for an extra fee. The societies collected dues throughout the year to pay for members' health care and burial costs. The musicians, funeral directors, family, and friends of the dead made up what is called the first or main line, while the crowd marching behind is collectively known as the **second line**.

Second Line

Anthropologist Helen Regis defines a second line parade as a public festival in which club members, musicians, and second liners come together to create "*a single flowing movement of people unified by the rhythm.*" At the head of the parade club members wear suits and sashes that display the club's name, often twirling matching umbrellas above their heads. For approximately four hours, they strut their dance moves in front of the band while the second liners fall in behind and along the side. Many second liners show off popular dance steps such as the high step and the buck jump. Others make their own sounds by singing, clapping, blowing whistles, hitting cowbells and beer bottles, and shaking tambourines.[346]

Historically, the New Orleans jazz funeral could last up to a week. A typical funeral began with a slow march from the home of the deceased to the church or funeral home. During the march, the coffin was carried by a horse-drawn hearse and was accompanied by a brass band playing somber dirges, somber Christian hymns performed at a slow-walking tempo. After the body is laid to rest, or **"cut loose,"** the band starts playing up-tempo music, the second liners begin dancing, and the funeral

[346] Sakakeeny, M. (2015, September 9). Jazz Funerals and Second Line Parades. *KnowLA Encyclopedia of Louisiana*. David Johnson (Ed.). Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Retrieved from www.knowla.org/entry/860/

transforms into a street celebration. The music and dancing are both a cathartic release for mourners and a celebration of a life well lived. In this state of jubilation, the group would then march back to the location of their reception.[347]

Contemporary Parades and Jazz Funerals

Second line parades create a sense of community among participants, and the public nature of the spectacle makes parading a powerful representation of African-American New Orleans. This has led to debates among parading organizations and musicians about how parades and funerals should be presented in public.[348]

In recent years, the jazz funeral tradition has opened up to include most notably, young men and women who have died tragically. At these funerals, the number of dirges performed is drastically reduced, altering the transition from dirges to up-tempo music that is the hallmark of the traditional funeral. Musicians no longer wear the traditional uniform of black band caps, white button-down shirts, and black dress pants, and instead dress in everyday clothes. Some tradition-minded organizations, such as the Black Men of Labor Social Aid & Pleasure Club, bemoan these changes and have sought to perpetuate parading traditions in an orthodox manner. African American men of these societies organize funerals for families who want to honor the dead with a traditional burial, and the club sponsors an annual second line parade in which musicians are required to dress in uniform and perform traditional music.[349]

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[347] Funeral Wise: Everything You Need to Know About Funerals: New Orleans Jazz Funeral Customs, (n.d.) Retrieved from www.funeralwise.com/customs/neworleans

[348] Sakakeeny, M. (2015, September 9). Jazz Funerals and Second Line Parades. *KnowLA Encyclopedia of Louisiana*. David Johnson (Ed.). Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. Retrieved from www.knowla.org/entry/860/

[349] Ibid.

The Day of the Dead – November 2nd

The **days of the dead** are truly a celebration of life. When children dance with caricatures of death, eat skull sugar molds and learn to respect that life is brief, they learn there is a circle to life and to not fear death and then are free to enjoy and appreciate every moment. Celebrating The Day of the Dead has a long history in Mexican Tradition. The Day of the dead is celebrated on November 2nd. Sometimes one hears reference to "the days of the Dead" which refers to the Days of October 31 – November 2nd. October 31st is **Halloween** or **All Hallows Eve**. November 1st is **"el Deo de los inocentes"** or the day of the children and All Saints Day. November 2nd is **All Souls Day** or the Day of the Dead.[350]

Historians estimate the traditions and rituals associated with **Día de los Muertos** ("Day of the Dead") date back 2,500 to 3,000 years to the indigenous cultures of Mexico. While these rituals have been taking place for thousands of years, the first outsiders to see them first hand would have been the Spanish Conquistadors who landed in Central America only some 500 years ago. During these early encounters the Conquistadors might have been met with actual skulls, as during the pre-Hispanic era it was common for skulls to be kept as trophies that would be displayed during rituals symbolizing death and rebirth.[351]

The Day of the Dead festivals and rituals originally took place in the ninth month of the Aztec calendar, which translates to about the beginning of August. These original festivities were celebrated for the entire month and were dedicated to the goddess Mictecacihuatl - the Lady of the Dead. **In modern times this Lady of the Dead has come to be symbolized by the Catrina ("the skeleton of a high society woman").**

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[350] The Day of the Dead, (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.unm.edu/~htafoya/dayofthedead.html
[351] Ibid.

The original month-long festivities are now celebrated on the Catholic All Saints Day and All Souls Day at the beginning of November.[352]

The Day of the Dead has its origins of a number of different national and religious customs. In pre-Hispanic times, the Mexican people maintained deep and personal times with their dead. In fact, family members were often buried directly underneath their homes. When the colonizing Spaniards arrived, they brought with them their Catholic customs, including All Souls' Day and All Saints' Day. These Christian practices link back to **Samhain**, the ancient Celtic holiday that honored the transition of the dead from this world to the spirit world.[353]

The Mexican people eventually blended their strong spiritual ties to the dead with the influencing Catholic holidays of All Souls' and All Saint's Day. The Mexicans believe that during the Day of the Dead, spirits return to Earth for the day to be with their families. **Little angel (angelitos)** spirits arrive on October 31st at midnight and stay for 24 hours. Adults come the next day and stay through November 2nd.

During the days of the dead, the family often takes the opportunity to visit the gravesite and pull weeds, clean any debris and decorate the graves of loved ones. Often candles, flowers and the favorite foods of the deceased are placed on the grave and the family visits, eats, sings and tells favorite stories about those who have passed. In the United States or for those for whom visiting the gravesite is not viable, (often graveyards are closed during the evening hours) the tradition has been adapted. Many set up altars in their homes and often communities host a variety of events. In Albuquerque's south valley the Marigold parade and celebration at the West Side Community Center is one such event. Altars are usually decorated with flowers, candles, pan de muerto, ceramic skulls, and most importantly, pictures of loved ones.[354]

Food placed on the altar consists of the loved one's favorite dishes and treats. Drinks should be placed on the altar to quench the thirst of the dead after their long journey back home. In many villages it is customary to offer alcoholic beverages. Salt is considered the spice of life and is one the staples that are often left at the altar. The scents of marigolds as well as burning copal (a resin of the copal tree) are thought to be most beloved by the spirits of the dead and invite them back home. The rituals used to

[352] Day of the Dead: A Brief History, (2010, September). Retrieved from http://www.lafuena te.com/Blog/Day-of-the-Dead-History/
[353] The History of the Day of the Dead http://www.briefholidays.net/dayofthedead/story.html
[354] The Day of the Dead, (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.unm.edu/~htafoya/dayofthedead.html

celebrate the day are varied and colorful. Yet, all carry the same message, celebrating the day of the dead is a true celebration of life.[355]

[355] Ibid.

The Art of Funeral Directing

The Professional Embalmer

By C.F Callaway 1939

For a comparatively brief period of time we seem to have become conscious of the fact that we should attach real importance to the cemetery part of our service. There was a day when funeral directors seemed to regard the services over when they were ready to start the cortege toward the cemetery. At that time there was a definite letting down at the close of the service at the home, church or chapel, and from that moment almost anything could happen without it counting as any degree of failing on the part of the funeral director.

Once, the cemetery superintendents and employees were given most of the duties and responsibilities at the cemetery. Frequently these men, clad in their soiled clothing, were conspicuous at the graveside. They were there to gesture us into proper approach to the grave, to see that the casket was properly placed, often manipulating the lowering device, and not infrequently issuing very audible commands. We are not over-drawing this picture because we have witnessed just such a performance.

A number of things have been necessary in bringing order out of this near chaos. First of all, funeral directors required an impression of the importance of this final service. It was necessary they be impressed with the fact their services had not ended until everything was completed at the cemetery, and they could not lay aside responsibility for this part of the funeral. Then came the use of the tent and chairs for the family, the lowering device and green-grass decorations. Then the casket placer and further improvements in all the materials mentioned. From the small original cemetery tents we moved to the spacious chapel tents; and from use of the tent only in inclement weather we have now come to expect a tent over the grave and under which the family and friends may gather at all graveside services. Instead of simply a protection against rain or storm we now protect against heat or cold. In addition, the use of a chapel tent serves the purpose of leaving a sense of feeling with the family that they have not left their dead out in the open, but inside, protected from the elements.

Not so long ago families could hardly avoid looking down into the deep open grave. Several years ago these open graves were unlined. Then we used white cloth for lining. Then came the oiled linings with painted-on designs of drapes, etc. Then came the green-grass sets which have been improved several times. Now we have the casket placer which gives us an opportunity to conceal the opening of the grave with draperies.

Families see only a draped catafalque that conceals the grave, and upon which rests the casket. As a background there are flowers arranged on floral racks similar to the setting we saw at the church or home service, and all this in a position within the tent created for just this arrangement. A beautiful picture like this is remembered by the family and their friends, and such beauty removes much of the sorrow that would otherwise be experienced.

After all is said and done, the fact remains that the real benefits from material things in funeral service are not the direct and physical benefits from these materials. Material benefits are not lasting. Their value soon leaves and is forgotten. The intangible things are the lasting values. The confidence established by these materials in the service is their greatest reward. The assurance that we are capable of rendering a proper service, and the impression that we really desire to bring every benefit possible to those whom we serve are, after all, the real values obtained from these investments in equipment.

Of all the facts existing in funeral service that we feel should be corrected, the disposition to consider everything from the standpoint of financial cost is most regrettable. Certainly, families can-not be expected to obligate themselves beyond the point of their possibilities for payment. Funeral directors cannot be expected to indulge in service at a cost beyond the point where the price received can-not show a reasonable profit. Yet, as funeral directors, in competition, we have forgotten that values of service mean much more to those whom we serve than values of materials used. Instead of trying to under-sell competitors we should spend our greatest efforts toward perfecting a service that creates greater mental and emotional satisfaction. Doing so is bound to bring us greater rewards than providing materials at a lower financial cost than our competitors. Nothing has so completely shaken the very foundation of our service than the race for cheaper funeral service. The casket manufacturing industries are today standing upon the threshold of disaster for no other reason than that they have become parties to this almost universal race to lower the average cost of materials in funeral service. Funeral directors demanded materials at a cost to them that would mean cheaper services to families and thus families have been educated to think first and most of funeral costs. For any group like our own to attempt to think in terms of price and to allow our minds to be attracted from the emotional values of service must lead to a similar movement of the thinking of the families we serve into this same direction. We establish a clientele of shoppers who seek financial bargains rather than those beauties that create emotional, mental satisfaction, the costs of which become matters of secondary consideration. By our own influences as funeral directors we have created these conditions which we now lament.

What can be the answer to all this? The road back is a long road. Traverse will be slow. Corrections can not be made in a day. Minds that have been moved away from the real values to values that are for the moment uppermost and then forgotten are very much like minds that have been detracted from morals to depravity. Reclamation is a slow and a tedious process. Tearing down of the real values in funeral service was accomplished rapidly and effectively. Now that we understand the price we must pay for such an error as has been injected into our service the very least we can do is to begin this slow climb back toward readjustment. Such building can undoubtedly be best accomplished by building toward a better and yet better service; toward a service that will satisfy to such a degree that will cause our clientele to remember such service long after the price paid is forgotten. Funeral service is in reality the name for a service that means mental and emotional satisfaction. Such satisfaction can not be accomplished except when materials used in the service are examples of unquestionable quality. Shoddy, cheap materials, regardless of price, leave a measure of dissatisfaction. After the service is completed and the account paid, there lingers in the minds of our friends a question as to whether they did the proper thing for their dead, if not, a definite feeling they did not do the right thing. If quality in material things were used and if quality was employed in all service rendered, there is established a permanent satisfaction that can come only from recognition of a good deed well done.

Certainly, these splendid services, made possible by proper equipment in which quality and beauty dispel much of the heartache at the moment, and in which memories are created that bring satisfaction through the years to come, are our only right road back to true values and a better day in our service.

Reference

Callaway, C.F. (1939, June) The Art of Funeral Directing. The Professional Embalmer, 9, 22.

The Progressive Mortician
CIRCA 1930s

A Timely Talk on Cremation

A plan for more sympathetic interest in Cremation on the part of Morticians, by Chas. J. Buchanan, President of the Cremation Association of America, read by the Secretary of the National Selected Morticians at their convention at Columbus, Ohio.

Mr. President and Fellow Morticians: At a meeting of the Cremation Association of America, held September 25 and 26, at which I was elected President, I was invited by your President, Mr. Harry Samson, to give you a short talk on cremation.

I am very sorry that I am unable to do this in person. In the first place, I shall miss the greeting of your President, who is such a fine host. I suppose this comes from his being accustomed to welcoming the coming and spreading the parting guest. You, of course, all are adept in that line yourselves. I have been sending my young men to your conventions since the organization of the National Selected Morticians.

I don't care to talk to you along the lines of general cremation. But, what I am pleading for is a sympathetic interest on the part of Morticians. You have the educated sympathy which is so essential in handling the details of the last sad rites as concerns both the dead and the living. There is a tendency at the present time to turn over the crematory management to cemetery associations and their superintendents. They may do it just as well as the trained Morticians, so far as the mechanical side of it is concerned, but the whole ceremony will lack the sympathetic touch which, in the first place, should be natural, and if not natural, in most cases is acquired by this close association with grief and a desire to give your patrons the very best service and the most sympathetic consideration.

Education stands for so much. We owe so much to education for what we are, not only morally, but our own success in a business way, that I am pleading for those who have had this training in our profession, to keep in hand this mode of disposition of the bodies of those who have passed away. The National Selected Morticians should see to it that there shall be a crematory centrally located in every community within our jurisdiction. There should at least be one in each state and each province of Canada and Mexico, and in some of these divisions there should be two or three. Morticians can do it more economically than other organizations because it is really a part of the funeral service and the matter of disposing of the ashes in a very simple process.

Municipal crematories are increasing in number, but I am sorry to say, they are not increasing in their sympathetic handling of the dead. Bodies are classified according to the circumstances surrounding the death, or of the interval between death and their coming into possession of the crematory. They use such terms as "stiffs," "stinkers," "floaters," and many other expressions which Morticians would not use at all. No matter what a person's station in life has been, this body, the body itself to us, is sacred, and is referred to only in the kindliest manner.

There is another matter in which you can assist very much, and that is, in overcoming prejudice of Morticians in general against cremation, on account of selling a cheaper casket for that sort of burial. We should take the lead in showing them that it is a matter of salesmanship as to whether a cheaper casket shall be sold. The real purpose of the casket is for the funeral service and for protecting the body while it needs it. This means of course, that we are using the casket in cremation. I have not the exact figures, but I think of the 18,000 cremations in the United States in the past year, at least 80 per cent were cremated in caskets. It is becoming quite general. This, and the fact that it causes a little more trouble to the Mortician, and perhaps a visit to the crematory accompanying the remains, has brought about the general practice of allowing the Mortician a discount of 10 percent on the cost of the cremation, and this will amount to more as the cremation price is advanced and standardized.

I expect to do considerable visiting during my term of office, not only to crematories in the country, but to cities which have not at present, but which I think, should have crematories. I shall make it a point to collect as much information as possible upon the building and operating of crematories, and shall be glad to supply you with this literature and to put you in correspondence with the latest crematory propaganda and construction information that I can possibly obtain. Cremation is increasing, and it is only a question of time when it will become more general, and we, as up-to-date Morticians, should keep abreast of the sentiment along this line of disposal, as well as inhumation.

In closing I want to express my regrets at not being able to meet all of you and look into your sympathetic faces, but I shall close with these lines, which I wrote for an article published a year or so ago, for our patrons and Morticians of our state:

"The body is the temple of the soul,
And when the worshiper has reached his goal.
Why hold intact the earthen cask that must,
When life departs, return to mother dust?

"So when the soul or life breath takes its flight
And when this cast-off body fades in blight,
The temple shall in incense rise
And waft the spirit to the skies."

Mortuary Arrangement

by
Fred Witman

Mortuary Management, May 1, 1931

In as much as lots measuring 50x120 feet are more or less common, I have designed a mortuary to fit that space. The actual outside dimensions of the accompanying plans are 100x40 feet. This leaves us sufficient space for drives entirely around the place.

It is to be hoped, however, that any mortuary, irrespective of size, will have plenty of room for shrubs and flowers, to create a more home-like appearance. In as much as this is sometimes impossible due to curious considerations, it behooves us to make the best of the situation.

By following the scale, I find that the plant herewith presented is suited to a business handling in the neighborhood of 120 cases annually. This is simply a matter of reducing the practice of many establishments to averages. H. O. Owen, who has studied the layout of perhaps more mortuaries than any other man in America, informs me that the floor space used in simplified accounting equals 31 square feet for each case handled annually, and as we have 300 square feet of apportionable space in this building, the reader may readily figure the business out on the average.

Efficient arrangement, on the other hand, makes it possible for us to get more work out of a given amount of space than might ordinarily be the rule I believe that the plant under consideration will prove to be extremely efficient when modified to fit individual needs. I do not suggest for a minute that the plans, line for line, are practicably adaptable. It is necessary to consider particular problems. We might, oftentimes, find that the chapel is rarely patronized, or comparatively infrequently, as is found to be the case in industrial sections of metropolitan centers. On the other hand, rural communities where everyone knows everyone else, funeral services for almost any one occasion a considerable turnout, and the size of the chapel is larger in proportion to the rest of the plant than would be the case elsewhere. Again, we might consider an establishment doing an exceedingly large percentage of its work among Catholic families. In such communities, the Rosary service does not receive the same attendance as the Mass, and because the Rosary is said at the chapel or the home, as the case may be, there is not the need for a larger chapel.

This same condition arises in different sections of the plant. Consider for example, a funeral home that is required to do the bulk of the embalming at the residence. It stands to reason that the size of its preparation room need not be as commodious as one doing a larger percentage of its work at the plant. Further, assume that the buying power and buying tendencies of a community are more or less fixed. The range of caskets may not be as large as would be needed where diverse industry and employment would allow no definite standard. Thus, we would not need a very large display room. On the other hand, we might find an establishment located in a community where the homes were exceedingly small, thereby requiring the bodies to be kept at the mortuary from the time of death until the services. If the plant did a considerable volume of business, the need for ample slumber rooms would be apparent at once.

Turn the situation around, and one slumber room and the chapel would be not only efficient, but fully adequate. There are further situations that bear on the building and its site. Ordinarily speaking, a community located in the heart of a district composed of large-acreage farms will not show the rapid growth that might be expected where railroads converge and a diversity of raw material, or its availability, makes possible manufacturing activities in addition to agricultural pursuits. In the one case, it is clear, the funeral director planning the erection of the new mortuary need not concern himself very much with the suitability of a plant that may be economically enlarged so much as the man in the community that may be expected to show a rapid growth.

When all these factors, plus innumerable others, arising out of local conditions are taken into full consideration, it may be plainly seen why it would be dangerous to follow any set of plans without first making a study of local needs. But I do contend that, with modification, we have a plant here that is quite decent and, with suitable alterations, one that will make a very comfortable and practical mortuary.

Looking at it from the outside, we note that the chapel occupies one end of the building, while in the center we see a set-back for a main entrance. This may be covered or not, as taste dictates. The garage is quite large enough for three cars, and a reduction of space in it would allow for a correspondingly greater amount of space in other departments of the ground floor.

Upon entering from the main entrance we have our choice. We may go either into the office or the lobby. Unless services are being held, I suggest that lobby not be used. The office is neither too large nor too small, but adequate, I should judge, unless the owners desire, to flourish with a lot of space and desks and a blonde stenographer. Leaving the office, we enter into a hall that is an extension of the lobby. The lobby could readily be blocked off with doors to insure privacy in the hall itself. At the opposite end is

a door that enters directly into the garage. The floor of the building might be raised above the garage floor or not, as need would indicate.

Turning at the corner of the hall, we walk directly toward the slumber-room entrances. There are two of them, in this case, one slightly larger than the other, though that is simply a matter of design. Either solid partitions might be used or else accordion doors, thus making possible an additional service room for small or private funerals. At the end of the hall is a lavatory, convenient to the slumber rooms, the office and the preparation room.

The preparation room is large and commodious, with the elevator running from it. Thus caskets for display are brought into the garage and loaded directly to the preparation room floor, onto the elevator and up to the sales room. Partitions, if desired, might be put in, but I doubt the wisdom of that, for, arranged as it is, the unloading of bodies for preparation directly into the preparation room makes the whole procedure simple and direct.

Returning now to the lobby, we step into the chapel. It is suitable to direct illumination from three sides if desired. Loading of the casket can be done in any manner desired at almost any point, so I have drawn no doors except the one used for entering. The family room is so located as to be private and comfortable. Leading from it is a hall in back of the music room to a large rest room. This is simply an idea that I like, though some building space could be saved by having simply a lavatory extending no further than the music room itself.

The hall running between the chapel and the music room could be eliminated by making the chapel extend to the hall itself, or else columns could separate the two, and drapes be used. In this latter case, a larger chapel for emergency purposes would be quite possible.

Again, we return to the lobby. In the center of it is the stairway to the second floor. The design does not clearly show it, but the court in back of it extends under, so that the upward slant allows for a window in the larger slumber room. There will be plenty of window space in the back slumber room, as will be noted.

Going up the steps, we come to the second floor. There is a large, spacious hall which, properly treated, would make an excellent arrangement room. Back of the stairs is a lavatory. The sales room is entered, and we find it extremely large. This permits an ample stock of merchandise, without in the least crowding the caskets together in such a hodgepodge that the cheapest looks as well as the best. The alcove beside the elevator would make an excellent place for the display of vaults, so that the demonstrator would have room for some action and the vault display itself would take on a different hue than is ordinarily the case. Too frequently funeral directors complain

about the unsatisfactory sale of vaults, only to find that the fault is theirs due to a cramped display and excessive profits. Whatever a vault nets is pure profit, for it is secondary merchandise, and anything that tends to stifle its sale is plain bad business. Here, then, we have ample space to treat the vault as a salable piece of merchandise, in a booth all its own.

Returning to the hall, we enter the living quarters from a door at the head of the stairs. I have deliberately refrained from trying to arrange any living accommodations for the simple reason that the funeral director must adapt that to his personal needs. It will be seen, however, that as the business grows in this particular plant, the garage may be placed elsewhere, and the living quarters reduced in size, thus making a plant capable of handling nearly double the volume that is really intended for it; and that without crowding, too.

Along the line of expansion, I should suggest that the display room be transferred to the living quarters, the preparation room be brought to the second floor. Slumber rooms could also be placed conveniently on the second floor, while additional office space and a second commodious chapel could completely take over the present slumber rooms, preparation room and part of the garage. Those, of course, are only suggestions.

The cost of construction of this or any other building doesn't change the fact that the buildings there must be constructed to meet greater extremes of temperature, which requires a sturdier construction than is prevalent in the West. While a small gas stove might heat a room in the West, a furnace to heat the entire establishment is required in the East. In other words, in the West buildings are built for show, while in the East, livability under varied climatic conditions becomes a costly necessity that removes a great deal of fancy work of which the West proudly boasts.

Don't Let Restorative Art Become a Lost Art

By Dominick J. Astorino, CFSF

The sinking of the Titanic is regarded as one of the most disastrous maritime tragedies of all time. More than 1,500 people died in the freezing waters of the Atlantic on April 15th, 1912; among the dead was prominent New York City real-estate businessman J. Jacob Astor IV, whose net worth was estimated at $87 million at the time of his death. Astor's remains were found in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean on April 22, 1912 -- a full week after he drowned. After recovery, his remains were brought ashore in Halifax, Nova Scotia and then sent home to New York City. Despite the circumstances of his death and recovery, Astor's family, as well as the public was able to view him in an open casket. The preparation and restorative work was done by none other than **Joel E. Crandall**, the **"father of restorative art."** Astor's case is just one of many examples of highly trained embalmers providing excellent restorative art work to the families they served during this time period. Albert Worsham successfully restored the mauled remains of a lion tamer who was attacked during a circus in 1917; restoration of both ears, both arms, more than half the face was achieved and open casket viewing was possible. The famous crime duo *Bonnie & Clyde*, were both viewed by an estimated 50,000 people, despite both suffering shattered skulls and over 100 bullet wounds.

Following the example of Crandall, our profession had a period of "restorative art renaissance" from approximately 1915-1945. During this time period, postgraduate mortuary schools that specialized in the teaching of restorative art were formed across the country. *The Demi-Surgical Institute of New York, The Postgraduate Institute of Restorative Art and Embalmer's Graduate College of Chicago,* are examples of such schools. The prevalence of restorative art education saw extensive articles and textbooks written exclusively on the subject during this same time Period; *Principles of Restorative Art (*Strub, 1932*), Manual of Restorative Art (*Praeger, 1934), *Textbook of Facial Reconstruction (*Curry, 1947) and *Practical Problems in Restorative Art* (Reichle,1945), are just some examples of the many publications that were made available.

Fast forward to 2016. Since the release of Mayer's Restorative Art text in 1943, there has been only one other book on the subject published (*Restorative Art & Science,* Klicker, 2002). The 2015 *NFDA* Conference was packed full of educational workshops and seminars over the course of several days, but only 7 percent of those related to embalming, let alone restorative art. The schools that were devoted to the teaching of restorative art have closed. Although it is true that mortuary schools across

the country have at least 1 or 2 semesters of restorative art, it seems that the more advanced techniques are no longer being taught. The cause of this decline over the past 60 years is multi-faceted and can be debated, but the result is that many current funeral professionals no longer possess the knowledge or skill in restorative art that those mentioned above had 80-100 years ago. Oftentimes in our funeral homes, traumatic deaths result in closed caskets or simple family ID's, with little to no effort on our part to make them viewable. How can we allow one of the basic tenets of our profession - the viewing of our dead – to be diluted and withered away to where closed caskets aren't just expected by the public, they're encouraged by the funeral professionals? What steps can we, as individuals and as a profession, take to reverse this trend?

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Reference

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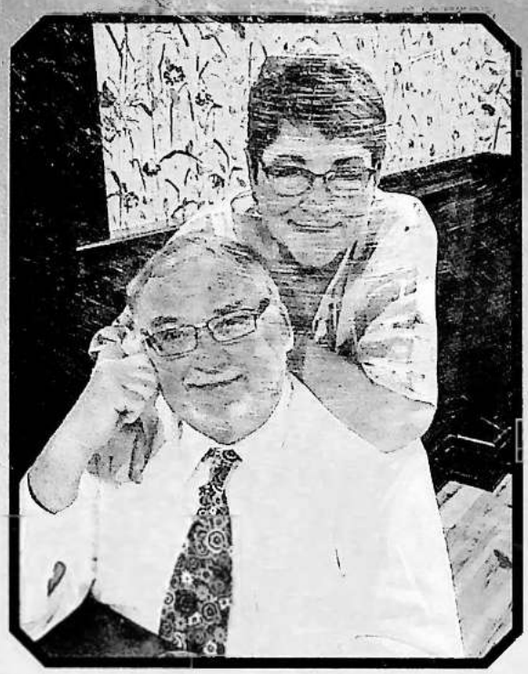

Dr. Ralph Klicker
and Joan Klicker, MSN

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Todd W. Van Beck
Funeral Director, Educator, Historian

A Walk Through Time: A History of Funeral Service, written by Dr. Ralph Klicker and Joan Klicker, MSN, takes a global approach to broadly looking at burial practices and traditions. This study will be an indispensable tool for those looking for a comprehensive history that shows why and how burials have evolved throughout various cultures and religions. It will be a valuable reference for students and practitioners in the mortuary science field.

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